SUMMONING WIND AND RAIN:
STUDYING THE SCIENTIZATION OF FENGSHUI IN SINGAPORE

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements i

Table of Contents iv

Summary x

Chapter 1

The Science of Wind and Water

1. Introduction 1
2. The Art of Wind and Water 4
3. The Singaporean Context 7
4. Studying Wind and Water 8
5. Thesis Arguments 14
6. Research Methods 20
7. Thesis Structure 21
8. Translation Notes 22

Chapter 2

Fengshui in Singapore

1. Introduction 23
2. Fengshui Schools and Approaches 24
3. The Development of Fengshui in Singapore 27

    3.1 Decline of Yin Dwelling Fengshui 27

3.2 Popularity of Yang Dwelling Fengshui 31
3.3 Fengshui Consumerism 32
3.4 The Syncretism of Fengshui 36

4. The Local Fengshui Scene 38

4.1 Fieldwork in Singapore 39
4.2 Learning from the Fengshui Teachers 41

5. Professionalization 45

5.1 Corporatization 45

5.1.1 Harnessing Information Technology 46
5.1.2 Adopting “Impression Management” Techniques 47
5.1.3 Improving Organizational Competency of Fengshui Firms 48

5.2 Institutionalization 49

5.2.1 Fengshui Associations 49
5.2.2 Fengshui Conventions 50
5.2.3 Fengshui Academies 52

Chapter 3

The Instrumental Rationalization and Secularization of Fengshui

1. Introduction 55

2. The Authenticity Debate 57

3. Instrumental Rationalization 61

3.1 Instrumental Rationalization of Fengshui in Singapore 62

3.1.1 Emphasizing Scientific and Practical Aspects of Fengshui 63
3.1.2 Simplifying Fengshui Practices 65
3.1.3 Adopting a Pragmatic Approach towards Fengshui 68

4. Pragmatism 72

4.1 Pragmatic Behaviours of Singaporeans 73
4.2 Pragmatism and Middle-Class Singaporeans 77

5. Secularization 78

5.1 Religious Revival and Fengshui Secularization in Singapore 79

5.2 Secularizing Fengshui in Singapore 80

5.2.1 Secular Fengshui Services 81
5.2.2 Selective Secularism 83

6. The Secular Singaporean State 87

Chapter 4

The Intellectualization and Individualization of Fengshui

1. Introduction 92

2. Intellectualizing Religion and Fengshui in Singapore 95

3. Intellectualization 98

3.1 Textualization 100

3.1.1 The Significance of Textualization in Singapore 101

3.2 Fundamentalization 102

3.2.1 Encouraging Fudamentalization in Singapore 105

3.3 Translation 106

3.3.1 Creating Distinctive Fengshui Styles 106

3.4 Systematization 109

3.4.1 Categorizing Fengshui Systems and Sub-Systems 110
3.4.2 Developing Generic Learning Themes and Categories 111
3.4.3 Systematizing Fengshui in Singapore 113

4. Correlating Educational Levels with Fengshui Attitudes 114

5. Individualization 115

5.1 Prioritizing Personal Efforts 117

5.1.1 Encouraging Fengshui Learning and Practice 117
5.1.2 Importance of Personal Efforts in Achieving Success 118

5.2 Learning Techniques for Individualized Learning 120

5.2.1 The Academic Modular System 121
5.2.2 Introducing Online Fengshui Learning Services 123
5.2.3 Providing Online Resources and Learning Platforms 125

6. Individualization and Self-Reliance in Singaporean Society 127

Chapter 5

Conclusion 129

Bibliography 135

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1: Summary of the Five Fengshui-Scientization Processes 143

Appendix 2: “Woodlands cemetery to make way for MRT depot” 147
(S.T. February 27, 2008)

Appendix 3: “LTA widens outreach efforts” 148
(S.T. March 31, 2008)

Appendix 4: “S. Korea election even moves the dead” 150
(S.T. November 15, 2007)

Appendix 5: “Ratting on geomancers;” 152
(T.B.T. February 1, 2008)

Appendix 6: “Who says fengsui is monkey business?” 155
(S.T. January 18, 2004)

Appendix 7: IFSA Newspaper Advertisement 158
(S.T. December 12, 2008)

Appendix 8: Identification of auspicious dates in mini calendar 159
(Teacher Yeo’s Telephone and Annual Calendar Booklet)

Appendix 9: Identification of fengshui sectors in residence 160
floor plan (Teacher Yeo’s Fengshui Audit)

Appendix 10: “Business degrees lose their attraction;” 165
(S.T. April 19, 2009)

Appendix 11: “What were 24 S'pore undergrads doing 167
in Moscow last week?” (S.T. June 12 2008)

Appendix 12: “Was Chinese wrongly taught for 30 years?;” 169
(S.T. November 27, 2009)

Appendix 13: “*Xinjiapo ligong xueyuan fengshui* 174
kaiban shi nian 新加坡理工学院风水开办 10 年.”
Chinese newspaper report on Singapore Polytechnic’s
10 years of fengshui courses (zbW. 22 March 2009)

Appendix 14: “Risks of religious fervour;” 176
(S.T. August 18, 2009)

Appendix 15: “Jaya: Don't take harmony for granted;” 181
(S.T. July 24, 2009)

Appendix 16: “Foolhardy to take harmony for granted.” 183
(S.T. July 25, 2009)

Appendix 17: “The awareness to right a wrong;” 188
(S.T. May 3, 2009)

Appendix 18: “How to beat S'pore's work woes;” 190
(S.T. May 27, 2009)

Summary

This thesis examines the processes of and the reasons for the scientization of fengshui in Singapore. There are many ways in which fengshui could possibly be ‘scientifically’ reinvented. However, the Singaporean case shows that the re-invention has taken shape in five main processes, namely, professionalization, instrumental rationalization, secularization, intellectualization, and individualization, which together constitute the fengshui-scientization trend. These processes alter the epistemological foundation, logic, appearance, and mode of accessing fengshui, consequently transforming the art from a cultural practice laden with traditional Chinese symbolism into sets of scientific techniques that emphasize the rational calculation of ‘fortune’.

In this thesis, I aim to show that fengshui-scientization is not the mere mimicry of conventional scientific ethos, but a dynamic process that involves the adaptation of a traditional art to modern circumstances constituted by the ideological and institutional frameworks in Singaporean society. In adapting to these frameworks, ‘scientized’ fengshui exhibits the ‘orthodoxy’ that is established by the former and reflected in the Singaporean ‘doxa’ of pragmatism, secularism, and self-reliance. Therefore, it accommodates the worldviews of middle-class Singaporeans by maintaining resonance between their habitus and the Singaporean doxa.

CHAPTER 1:

THE SCIENCE OF WIND AND WATER

1. Introduction

Fengshui evokes different reactions from people, ranging from wholehearted believers who profess it as an ancient science, to skeptics who dismiss it as superstition. Many Singaporeans I have spoken to, however, oscillate between skepticism and belief. Although most of them are unsure of what fengshui is, they tend to treat it as a Chinese tradition that helps deal with all sorts of issues they face in life. Instead of totally embracing fengshui as an all-encompassing worldview or entirely rejecting all of its propositions, these Singaporeans have adopted a 'better to be safe than sorry' attitude towards the art, having engaged fengshui services for selecting the most auspicious dates for weddings, for configuring the most providential furniture arrangements, and for choosing the best names for their newborn babies.

There are many different styles of fengshui existing in the world today and there are various ways in which practitioners go about categorizing them. Singaporean fengshui practitioners generally classify the various fengshui schools as either the Yang Dwelling or the Yin Dwelling approach. The former involves sets of techniques that evaluate the providentiality of the arrangement of living spaces while the latter focuses on that of ancestral tombs. (Bruun, 2003: 3). It is believed that the correct siting of both types of dwellings, undertaken by practitioners, will improve people's well-being and success in

life.

Despite the existence of both Yang and Yin Dwelling approaches, the former remains the more popular; its two sets of formulae, called "*Xuan Kong Feixing*玄空飞星" (*Xuan Kong* Flying Stars) and "*Bazhai* 八宅" (Eight Mansions) are most commonly employed by local practitioners. Despite some technical differences, what these two formulae share in common is a devotion to presenting themselves as a form of 'scientific' knowledge. At the most basic level, the process of scientizing fengshui involves de-emphasizing or removing religious and cultural connotations carried in fengshui symbols, instruments, and texts[1]. This has profound implications for the reach of fengshui services to the masses, particularly clients with religious backgrounds and those from the educated middle-class.

Even though certain religious dogmas, for example evangelical Christianity, treat fengshui as a form of pagan practice, packaging fengshui as a science has managed to circumvent various theological prohibitions. Fengshui clients can therefore employ the art without worrying about its religious implications, through compartmentalizing fengshui as this-worldly problem-solving methods while their religious practices deal with eschatological anxieties. Religiosity aside, from what I have observed in the field, clients who patronize 'scientized fengshui' share other common traits, most prominently their socio-economic status and educational qualifications.

[1] Aldridge (2007) talks about the politics of definition in relation to religion and lists the advantages and disadvantages of being defined as a religion. By rejecting the label, advocates have certain advantages, like access to secular settings, such as education, which debar religious advocates (Aldridge, 2007: 21-28).

These clients not only attend seminars about specific fengshui schools of thought and methods, but also purchase fengshui educational aids like books and videos. The trends towards secularization, intellectualization, and instrumental rationalization of fengshui are, however, merely a few dimensions of fengshui-scientism. There are other scientization mechanisms, some of which are less obvious than others, that I uncovered over the past three years as I attended seminars, took private lessons from fengshui teachers, and accompanied professional fengshui service-providers on their consultation visits.

As I grew familiar with the local fengshui scene, three questions emerged in my mind: what constitutes fengshui-scientism, why is scientized fengshui gaining popularity in Singapore, and how do local practitioners go about scientizing it? This thesis is a culmination of my attempts to answer the above questions. My purpose in this thesis is to lay bare what the fengshui-scientization trend entails, and to relate it to the Singaporean political, social, cultural, and economic circumstances that practitioners find themselves in. Although fengshui-scientization involves professionals (those who offer fengshui advice for a fee), clients, and the above-mentioned circumstances in the Singaporean context, I noticed that the professionals are the ones who play the central roles, and who have the most vested interests in making fengshui scientific. Even though it would better contextualize fengshui practices in Singapore if I were to allocate equal space to clients, due to the limitation of space and in light of the conspicuous roles that the professionals play, I have decided to pay more attention to the latter. Doing so would at least provide the

first empirically-grounded and theoretically-informed picture of fengshui practices in Singapore, which has thus far, and strangely, received only marginal sociological attention.

2. The Art of Wind and Water

Fengshui has been defined as the identification, and manipulation of landform configurations and bodies of water in order to direct the universal "*qi* 气"[2], or as represented in the West, "cosmic current" or "energy flow", for the purpose of optimizing a person's wealth, health, and other aspects of his quality of being (Bruun, 2003: 3). Yoon (2006) made a distinction between the terms fengshui and geomancy, which have often been used interchangeably in popular writings (e.g. Lip, 2009). He classified fengshui as a Chinese practice whereas geomancy referred to similar-looking arts found in East Asia, such as *Pungsu* in Korea and *Fusui* in Japan (Yoon, 2006: 3). Despite his differentiating fengshui and geomancy geographically, Yoon still adopted a unified definition of both terms as "the unique and highly systematized ancient Chinese art of selecting auspicious sites and arranging harmonious structures such as graves, houses and cities on them by evaluating the surrounding landscape and cosmological directions" (Yoon, 2006: 4).

[2] The notion of '*qi*' can be found in writings like the "*Yijing* 易经" (Book of Changes/Simplicity) or the "*Huangdi Neijing* 黄帝内经" (Inner Canons of the Yellow Emperor) which were written before the Common Era.

Scholars conventionally identify the Forms School, or the Jiangxi School, and the Compass School, or the Fujian School, as the earliest documented fengshui factions. The Forms School, developed in the Tang dynasty (618-907), emphasized the influence of 'forms and outlines', which refers to natural and man-made land configurations, on the quantity, quality, and flow of *qi*. The Compass School, developed in the Song dynasty (960-1279), focused more on "*Bazi*八字[3]" and "*Ershiba Xiu* 二十八宿[4]" techniques (Eight Characters and Twenty-Eight Constellations) (See Yap, 2005a, 2006a, 2007b) that are represented by inscriptions on the "*luopan* 罗盘" or fengshui compass. This school prioritizes compass alignment, and directional analysis of the stars and constellations because of the belief that qi is affected more by the movement of stars rather than static landforms (Bruun, 2003: 5).

Fengshui reached its peak in popularity during the Qing dynasty (1644 – 1911), being treated not only as methods of divination used to acquire 'supernatural knowing', but also as a kind of 'magic' that manipulates cosmic forces to influence the future (Smith, 1991: 131). Therefore, practitioners have also been perceived as possessing the powers of "*hufeng huanyu* 呼风唤雨" (summoning wind and rain). This Chinese idiom constitutes my thesis title

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[3] *Bazi* is a divination technique that converts a person's birth particulars into eight Chinese cosmological symbols known as the Ten Heavenly Stems and Twelve Earthly Branches. These symbols are then analyzed using "*wuxing* 五行" (Five Phases theory) and other concepts to predict a person's future and understand his or her tendencies.

[4] The twenty-eight constellations technique, which is found in the "*Tongshu* 通书" (Chinese Almanac), designates the daily 'stars' that exert their influences on each particular day. Based on this technique, the stars rotate on a twenty-eight day cycle and are used for date selection and fengshui purposes.

because it parallels how some local practitioners tend to exaggerate the 'omnipotent powers' of fengshui. On a positive note, however, it is believed that both wind and rain are highly beneficial for the land and its people, as reiterated by the Chinese saying, "*fengtiao yushun guotai minan* 风调雨顺国泰民安", meaning "[w]hen the winds (fung) blow harmoniously and the rains (shui)(*sic*) come down regularly, the Realm shall flourish and the people live in peace and comfort" (Walters, 1989: 21).

Regardless of the manner in which schools of fengshui differentiate themselves in ancient China, practitioners in both contemporary China and Singapore no longer distinguish between the Forms and Compass Schools. In comparison to how it was treated during the Qing era in China, fengshui in Singapore is now taken as a form of divination (albeit not necessarily 'magical') that forecasts the future and as a 'siting' method, involving the manipulation of space, that aids in creating an environment that neutralizes negative cosmic influences and activates positive ones. Both divination and siting methods can be found in the Yang and Yin Dwelling approaches. Taking into consideration the Singaporean context, I depart from Yoon in defining fengshui as a Chinese practice that identifies, and manipulates temporal and spatial configurations. This allows the practitioner to activate and mobilize positive cosmic forces in order to achieve desired outcomes, such as good health and wealth, and to neutralize and bypass negative influences so as to deflect misfortunes, such as sickness and accidents. Although my definition generally identifies major traits of fengshui practices found in Singapore, the scientization of fengshui in recent years necessitates a further refinement of

what fengshui constitutes today. This issue will be taken up in chapter two.

3. The Singaporean Context

Since Singapore's independence in 1965, the country faced a series of challenges, which the state attempted to resolve through ideological and institutional means. Prime among the ideological components were pragmatism, self-reliance, and secularism. The Singaporean government adopted the ideology of pragmatism to manage regional sensitivities and solve its political, economic, and social problems concurrently. This ideology has subsequently improved the material well-being of Singaporeans: providing a decent living for all citizens, giving workers rising incomes, and improved living standards progressively (Chua, 1989: 1016).

In the course of its governance, the state also attempted to counter undesirable Western values by erecting various ideological buffers against these influences. For instance, in perceiving welfarism as a Western system that causes economic competitiveness and work ethic to deteriorate (Chua, 1995: 26), the state promoted self-reliance to incline Singaporeans towards exercising self-help rather than expecting state assistance. To extend its governance over the religious domain, the state has embraced a secular ideology that not only signified its neutrality on religious matters, but also legitimized its authority as an impartial arbiter of such issues (Tong, 2007: 236). This enabled the state to regulate the religious realm by carrying out interventions to preserve social harmony and stability. In functioning as

ideological tools of the state, pragmatism, self-reliance, and secularism have created conducive existential circumstances for fengshui-scientization in Singapore.

4. Studying Wind and Water

Although some scholars have classified fengshui as a popular form of religious life (e.g. Yang, 2008), the terms ‘religion’ and ‘spirituality’ carry certain Eurocentric connotations, and are therefore unsuitable as analytical categories for analyzing fengshui, a traditional practice that emerged from a vastly different cultural-historical milieu. Palmer’s study of qigong in China noted that the concept of religion and its institutions did not appear in China until the 20th century (Palmer, 2007: 23), whereas the notion of *qi* can be found in ancient writings like the “*Yijing* 易经” (the Book of Changes-Simplicity) and the “*Huangdi Neijing* 黄帝内经” (the Inner Canons of the Yellow Emperor). The concepts of ‘religion’ or ‘spirituality’ thus materialized in a different historical and cultural context from the circumstances surrounding the emergence of fengshui, which began to be recognized as an independent practical art and science during the early Han period (ca. 200 B.C.) (Lee, 1989: 89).

In spite of such differences, some western scholars nevertheless studied fengshui as a form of popular religion that emerged in the West as part of a spiritual revival. In his latest book on fengshui, Bruun (2008) elaborated on the following three themes: “the common interest in Chinese culture in the

West, the fragmentation of ideology and everyday life, and the tendency towards religious or spiritual revival in the world today" (Bruun, 2008: 3), and identified them as the "main impulses in the formation of fengshui as a global current of thought and practice" (Bruun, 2008: 5). He viewed the common interest in Chinese culture in the West as a byproduct of the growing fragmentation of people's working and social lives occurring in industrial society and modernity. These fragmentation processes have accelerated with the advent of the 'post-industrial' or 'post-modern' society and resulted in "life in fragments". Subsequently, the new knowledge society further revolutionized everyday life that disrupted social life and discarded conventional outlooks. Given these social transformations, the emergence of fengshui in the West, together with other religions, cosmologies, and belief systems, represented the rise of spirituality as a phenomenon that is perceived as evolving into a spiritual revolution and a new age (Bruun, 2008: 4-6).

However, my study of fengshui practices in Singapore contradicts Bruun's interpretations of fengshui. Even though Singaporean Chinese form the ethnic majority of the local population and fengshui constitutes a Chinese practice among Singaporeans, this art is gaining renewed interest in Singapore due to fengshui-scientization. For instance, practitioners have engaged in instrumental rationalization and secularization to modify the logic of fengshui, eliminate its religious and spiritual influences, and transform the art into an amoral and a-religious practice. Consequently, local practitioners who practise scientized fengshui are not affiliated with any religious or spiritual revival in Singapore, given that scientized fengshui is purged of all religious or spiritual

influences. On the contrary, they participate actively in the various fengshui-scientization processes to legitimize fengshui as rational and scientific, rather than religious or spiritual, practices.

Although practitioners hail from different backgrounds and possess varying degrees of competency, educational qualifications, and resources, they tend to accentuate these variations in order to differentiate themselves from other practitioners, and appeal to a specific clientele. Bruun categorized the three most common types of fengshui practitioners in urban cities and described them as the urban fengshui masters: the traditional, village-type fengshui specialist, the Buddhist or Taoist monk who practises fengshui, and the academically trained 'fengshui professor' (Bruun, 2008: 124-128). However, he failed to explain conclusively how these practitioners' geographical, religious, and academic backgrounds accounted for differences in their practices. Even though he identified these practitioners as belonging to different stages of a spiritual revival, he did not emphasize how and to what extent these practitioners employed fengshui in a spiritual manner, or identified the different stages of the spiritual revival. These shortcomings highlighted his inability to distinguish the types of practices found in the cities he studied, which were also undifferentiated in terms of their social, economic, cultural, and political conditions. Instead of accounting for complex factors, Bruun only provided cursory descriptions of fengshui in eastern and southern China cities, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Conversely, my analysis of fengshui practices in Singapore would demonstrate how local practices adapted to social, economic, cultural, and political conditions in that city. These

conditions also accounted for how and why fengshui has been modified by the fengshui-scientization trend in both substance and appearance. In covering these themes, my thesis exemplifies an ethnographic study of fengshui in an urban setting that has yet to be explored substantively in academic literature.

The study of fengshui-scientization in Singapore is aimed at illustrating how fengshui has been modified in specific context. Bruun identified several fengshui modifications in its adoption into the West. First, fengshui was amputated from being associated with Yin Dwelling Fengshui. Second, it was de-spirited by excluding the spiritual influences of gods, ancestors, and ghosts, focusing instead on impersonal forces. Third, fengshui is being practised indoors, with its emphasis on interior design and decoration rather than on external physical surroundings. Fourth, fengshui has been infused with new concepts of ecology, environment, nature, and design. These modifications, according to him, have significantly adapted fengshui to a western mindset (Bruun, 2008: 159).

However, fengshui-scientization not only incorporates Bruun's four modifications but also changes the epistemological foundation, logic, appearance, and mode of accessing fengshui. Even though Bruun observed that fengshui is being modified to cater to the audience in western countries, such modifications also occur in an Asian society like Singapore. It is therefore necessary to understand which aspects of Singaporean society are relevant to the directions that fengshui has evolved towards, and conversely, how its practices adapt to the societal context it finds itself in. Hence, this

thesis will show how fengshui has adapted to the ideological and institutional frameworks found in Singapore.

As my study on fengshui-scientization focuses on how its respective processes transform fengshui in Singapore, it does not employ western scientific discourse (Chalmers, 1999) to determine whether fengshui constitutes science. Western scholars, however, have attempted to do so by adopting a western scientific paradigm to evaluate the art. Subsequently, they labeled it as a "grossly superstitious system" (Needham, 1954: 359), "natural science" (Eitel, 1979: 5-6), or simply condemned it as a "hybrid monster, born of union of filial devotion in its vilest form with blind gropings after natural science" (De Groot, 1910: 1048). Fengshui has therefore become a pseudo-science or superstition within the Eurocentric frameworks that the above authors have employed.

In his M.A. thesis on fengshui, Stephen Feuchtwang (1974) interpreted fengshui by translating and examining the rings and symbols of the fengshui compass. He then identified four aspects of the art: how its natural classifications paralleled social classifications; how it contained symbolism and psychological projections of the imagination; the possible functions of fengshui as divination; and its role as a particular perception of reality (Bruun, 2008: 88). Even though Feuchtwang undertook an extensive analysis of the fengshui compass, it however constituted his main analytical model. He also relied heavily on textual analysis to develop the theoretical and analytical frameworks that supported his findings. Fengshui practices, which constitute

an integral component of fengshui, are not examined due to his heavy dependence on secondary sources. In a nutshell, by presuming fengshui to be a static symbolic system that is incompatible with western science, the above authors have not only failed to interpret the art in its own terms, but also excluded its most important aspect - practice.

Although the study of fengshui practices is critical to a valid representation of the art, such study requires a certain level of fengshui competency. However, few scholars possess the necessary practical fengshui knowledge that would allow them to do so. Even though some scholars observed fengshui practices in their fieldwork, they did not partake in or documented these practices adequately. For instance, Bruun merely studied secondary accounts in the form of village practitioners' descriptions of the art without practising it himself. He then concluded that they were "actors with a specific professional interest in supporting one mode of explanation over others" (Bruun, 2008: 205), without explaining how and why these practitioners supported particular explanations. This incomplete representation of fengshui illustrated his lack of practical fengshui knowledge that Field (2004) has identified as a possible reason for the shortcomings in his research. To begin with, Bruun might have overlooked vital information in the field and specified little information on site-orientation procedures in the villages. Second, he could not explain why different fengshui practices existed within the same province, although he provided the impression that a particular school of fengshui is emphasized in a particular province. Third, he did not explain why village practitioners were unaware of the different fengshui

schools. Fourth, he did not always appear to know which fengshui school he was discussing in his book (Field, 2004: 188).

Even though Bruun's findings may have contributed to the fengshui academic literature, however these shortcomings could have seriously compromised his research efforts. Similarly, local theses on fengshui did not analyze fengshui practices comprehensively (e.g. Ang, 1989; Ho, 1990), thus constituting a research gap in the academic literature. In order to plug the various gaps that were overlooked by the authors mentioned above, I aim to derive ethnographically relevant meanings embedded within practitioners' accounts and practices, and demonstrate how and why fengshui practices vary in both form and meaning. In identifying these variations, we can better understand the manners in which practitioners choose to represent fengshui accordingly.

5. Thesis Arguments

My research on fengshui examines how and why fengshui is being scientized in Singapore. For this purpose, I first conceptualize a fengshui-scientization trend, which comprises the five processes of *professionalization*, *instrumental rationalization*, *secularization*, *intellectualization*, and *individualization*. These processes not only modify the *epistemological foundation*, *logic*, *appearance*, and *mode of accessing fengshui*, but also transform the art into a modern practice comprising sets of 'scientific' techniques. Epistemological and practical implications aside, the

fengshui-scientization trend also reveals the indispensable roles that certain ideological and institutional practices play in the re-invention of a traditional Chinese art. My primary argument in this thesis is that - to use a Weberian term - an ‘elective affinity’ exists between fengshui-scientization and the ideological climate found in Singapore. To put it in more specific terms, the Singaporean state’s ideological values of pragmatism, secularism, and self-reliance, and their institutional manifestations, are reflected in the professionalization, instrumental rationalization, secularization, intellectualization, and individualization of fengshui. The following few paragraphs will discuss these five processes in detail (see Appendix 1 pgs 143-146 for a summary of the five fengshui-scientization processes).

In recent years, fengshui has experienced increasing professionalization in the forms of corporatization and institutionalization. Corporatization comprises the utility of information technology to disseminate fengshui knowledge and support fengshui practices, the adoption of “impression management” techniques (Goffman, 1959) to enhance public profiles of practitioners, and the accreditation of fengshui firms. These efforts serve to cultivate the corporate image of fengshui, primarily its aura of professionalism, in order to improve public perceptions towards the art. Instances of managing this ‘aura’ include modernizing the public personae of professionals by dressing them up in lounge suits and exhibiting certificates awarded by other professional bodies. Such actions also demonstrate how practitioners have incorporated self-presentation as a key aspect of professionalization.

The institutionalization of fengshui has led to the establishment of fengshui associations and academies, and organization of fengshui conventions. These institutional bodies and events serve to increase professional membership, academicize fengshui, safeguard members' interests, and legitimize the fengshui profession. Therefore, practitioners who join these institutional bodies and participate in these events can better distinguish themselves from their competitors, secure available capitals, and protect their positions within the fengshui 'field'. As argued by Bourdieu (1977), a field refers to a network of social and political relations. From my observations over the past three years, practitioners who occupy the more favourable positions within this field are those who possess the cultural and social capital required for their fengshui-scientization strategies. They are thus the ones who are more successful in attracting the well-to-do middle and upper class patrons, subsequently acquiring more economic capital. Even though I could not penetrate the fengshui field owing to my limited cultural and social capital, nonetheless my fieldwork on the local fengshui scene affirmed that allying fengshui with the instrumental-rational, secular, intellectual, and individualized characteristics of scientific practice has allowed some professionals maintain the most favourable configuration of the Singaporean fengshui field.

By eliminating its cultural and religious influences, much of the substantive aspects of fengshui has been de-emphasized and in certain cases, erased from fengshui prescriptions. What has taken its place is instead an instrumental logic that is devoid of moral, cultural, and religious prescriptions.

This instrumental-rational approach then allows practitioners to secularize their practices as being a-religious and a-moral, thus appealing to a wider pool of clientele who, for ideological reasons, are prohibited from employing fengshui methods. All these alterations result in fengshui existing as an instrumental means that can be employed to achieve any desired ends. The instrumental rationalization of fengshui has therefore, in Weber's terms, 'de-mystified' the art into a mere *technique* that promises results without telling the practitioner which result is more desirable than the others.

The intellectualization of fengshui is responsible for altering the art's epistemological foundation. Instead of being portrayed as a traditional Chinese practice, some practitioners prefer to argue for the art's verifiable origins in classical texts. These texts are used as an orthodox fengshui canon, allowing practitioners to further standardize the various schools, tools, and techniques of fengshui for a more intellectual rather than commodified mode of consumption. For instance, instead of emphasizing the *ownership* of fengshui 'lucky charms', these practitioners advocate the *study* of fengshui as a form of scientific knowledge. Textualized and intellectualized versions of fengshui are then much more easily translated into English and packaged as fengshui educational products, such as books, DVDs, and online courses. By textualizing, fundamentalizing, translating, and systematizing 'classical' fengshui knowledge, these practitioners are able to help English-educated middle-class Singaporean fengshui enthusiasts overcome cultural and linguistic difficulties encountered.

Besides appealing to a selected pool of clientele, the emphasis on studying rather than owning fengshui knowledge also assigns much more responsibility to the practitioner. Instead of wholly relying on fengshui service-providers or on the ‘power’ that fengshui commodities provide, clients are encouraged to acquire fengshui knowledge using educational materials and to practise fengshui by conducting basic fengshui audits. The intellectualization of fengshui has thus led to the individualization of agency that requires significantly more self-regulation on the practitioners’ part in order to employ fengshui effectively.

The above five processes involved in fengshui-scientization would be difficult to undertake without certain conducive existential conditions. When seen in relation to Singapore’s ideological and institutional context, the scientization of fengshui reveals intricate ‘collusions’ between structure and agency. The change in the epistemological foundation of fengshui has encouraged fengshui education to become a primary mode of ‘doing’ fengshui. This emphasis on individualized and regulatory learning resonates with the ideology of self-reliance that flows through certain state initiatives like ‘life-long learning’ and ‘upgrading’ in order for the individual Singaporean to remain vocationally competitive and employable. Emphasizing the instrumental over the substantive dimensions of fengshui echoes both the state’s ideology of pragmatism and the pragmatic practices of the average Singaporean (Chua, 1983, 1985). In sterilizing fengshui of its religious and cultural dimensions, fengshui also conforms to the Singaporean state’s secularism. This conformity to secularism not only fits into the local

ideological and institutional frameworks, but also endows practitioners with more freedom to define and practise the art without fear of government intervention in religious practices.

In conclusion, although the scientization of fengshui appears to be nothing more than an appeal to the preferences of consumers, although scientized fengshui accommodates the worldviews of the educated middle-class, I argue that there are other significant sociological reasons for the phenomenon. If indeed the scientization of fengshui is merely a commercial strategy, with the rise of China as an economic power and worldwide interest in Chinese culture, sterilizing fengshui of its cultural aspects would be counter-productive. Therefore, even though I have argued that scientized fengshui does appeal to the English-educated middle-class, I do not see scientization as a calculated move of fengshui professionals. Doing so would be allocating far too much agency to these professionals while disregarding the roles of other players within and beyond the field, and most importantly, the 'rules of the game' itself. By incorporating the Singaporean context as a variable in my study, I attempt to show fengshui-scientization is part of the entire 'game'. Insofar as players do not *consciously* adhere to the rules in the field, fengshui scientists also play along, quasi-rationally and semi-consciously, with the Singaporean institutional and ideological frameworks (Bourdieu, 1977, 1989). In so doing, an 'elective affinity' between fengshui-scientism and Singaporean society is maintained in an almost 'natural-progressive' manner, allowing scientized fengshui to thrive, in Bourdieu's words, like 'a fish in water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127).

6. Research Methods

My analysis of fengshui examines fengshui practices in relation to Singaporean society and vice versa. This approach involves largely qualitative methods that include interviews and participant observation. I enrolled in fengshui courses and participated in fengshui seminars in order to get an in-depth view of the current trends and perceptions of fengshui practices. Participant observation was carried out in field sites such as residential and office spaces, and documented using field notes. Besides observing practitioners in action, as they go about providing consultation to clients, I also conducted in-depth interviews with them. In total, I had access to six fengshui professionals and three other miscellaneous practitioners that I got acquainted with in the course of my fieldwork. The profiles of these practitioners, together with how I conducted my fieldwork in three stages, will be elaborated in chapter two.

Given the emphasis on texts by 'fengshui scientists', I spent a considerable amount of time going through the various 'classical fengshui canons' that they have recommended. This allowed me to acquire a better understanding of the epistemological 'style' and internal logic of scientific fengshui. In order to get an idea of public perceptions of fengshui, I also took note of how fengshui is represented in various media, particularly major newspapers, magazines, and websites. By integrating interviews, participant observation, and textual analysis, I hope to produce an ethnographic account of fengshui practices in Singapore, and not merely echo official standpoints,

treat fengshui as a symbolic system, or reduce it to a form of religion.

7. Thesis Structure

This thesis will be organized according to the respective fengshui-scientization processes. Chapter two will introduce the reader to the local fengshui scene by documenting particular fengshui trends, elaborating on my three stages of fieldwork, and profiling local practitioners who appear regularly in this thesis. The last part of the chapter will introduce fengshui-scientization by examining professionalization to understand how practitioners alter the appearance of fengshui by corporatizing and institutionalizing the art.

Chapter three goes into the details of fengshui-scientization by examining the instrumental rationalization and secularization of fengshui. These processes involve how practitioners replace substantive aspects of fengshui with an instrumental logic and secularize fengshui into an a-religious and amoral practice. Such modifications also reflect how fengshui appeals to the worldviews of middle-class Singaporeans by adapting to the ideological values of pragmatism and secularism in Singaporean society.

Chapter four explains how and why practitioners undertake intellectualization and individualization in order to alter the epistemological foundation and mode of accessing fengshui. Besides enabling middle-class Singaporeans to overcome ideological and practical constraints of

appropriating the art, these alterations also encourage self-regulative behaviours and emphasize personal responsibility as the *sine qua non* for fengshui competency. Similarly, these changes account for how fengshui complements the dispositions of middle-class Singaporeans by imitating aspects of Singapore's educational system, adopting the English language, and conforming to the ideology of self-reliance in Singaporean society. Chapter five will be the concluding chapter that sums up the observations and arguments in the thesis.

8. Translation Notes

Hanyu Pinyin will be employed to Romanize Chinese words in this thesis. Simplified Chinese characters will be included after the *pinyin* translations to help the reader distinguish between words with similar Romanized spellings.

CHAPTER 2:

FENGSHUI IN SINGAPORE

1. Introduction

Before examining the fengshui-scientization trend, it is necessary to account for the development of fengshui in Singapore. This chapter presents a socio-historical study of fengshui and constitutes a prelude to the fengshui-scientization trend. First, I will describe the general fengshui schools and approaches, and then elaborate on fengshui trends, such as the decline of Yin Dwelling Fengshui, popularization of Yang Dwelling Fengshui, fengshui consumerism, and the syncretism of fengshui, to chart its development in Singapore. Following that, I will introduce the local fengshui scene by profiling practitioners who feature regularly in this thesis and examine how local practitioners professionalize fengshui through corporatization and institutionalization. In documenting how practitioners attempt to legitimize themselves and accredit the fengshui profession, these changes also exemplify how the art's appearance changes from a traditional art into a modern practice constituting corporate-style services.

In spite of its increasing adoption in the fengshui industry, I argue that professionalization only plays an auxiliary role in fengshui-scientization. This is because it does not satisfactorily explain modifications to the epistemological foundation, logic and mode of accessing fengshui, or account for the significance of the ideological and institutional frameworks in

Singaporean society. These issues will be explicated by examining instrumental rationalization, secularization, intellectualization, and individualization in chapters three and four.

2. Fengshui Schools and Approaches

Fengshui scholars and practitioners have categorized fengshui into different 'schools' of thought. The former identify the Forms and Compass Schools as the two main fengshui schools (Bruun, 2003, 2008; De Groot, 1910; Feuchtwang, 1974; Yoon, 2006), while others further differentiate these schools into the "intuitive and analytical approaches" (Bennett, 1978). Some practitioners, however, have claimed that the division of fengshui into the Forms and Compass Schools is wrong and creates misleading distinctions of the art (Yap, 2006d, 2007c). Despite these contestations over fengshui typologies, these fengshui schools provide a basic understanding of fengshui that will help the reader to better appreciate its development in Singapore.

To reiterate, fengshui scholars have identified fengshui as belonging either to the Forms or Compass Schools. The Forms School was also known as the *Xingshih* 形势, *Luanti* 峦体, X*ingjia* 形家, *Jiangxi* 江西, *Anhui* 安徽, Shapes, or *Yang Yün-Sung* 杨筠松 School (Lee, 1989: 163). This school is attributed to *Yang Yün-Sung* (874-888) of the late Tang Dynasty (618-907) whose teachings flourished in the *Jiangxi* and *Anhui* provinces. Its methods emphasize the study of physical configurations, such as mountains and watercourses, surrounding the fengshui site. By categorizing these

configurations into the five phases[5], practitioners of this school examine the *qi* flow in order to locate the most favourable site or "*xue* 穴"(lair or meridian spot) (Lee, 1989: 158). The Compass School was also recognized as the *Fangwei* 方位, *Liqi* 理气, *Fajia* 法家, *Fujian* 福建, *Zhejiang* 浙江, *Zongmiao*宗庙, *Wuzhai* 屋宅 or *Wang Ji* 王伋 School (Lee, 1989: 163). Developed by *Wang Ji (*1030-1050) in the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and popularized in the *Fujian* and *Zhejiang* provinces, this school is based on the metaphysical speculations of the Sung Neo-Confucian cosmology, and analyzes the directional aspects of the fengshui site based on various cosmological techniques (Lee, 1989: 158-159).

However, a popular fengshui author and practitioner, Joey Yap, claimed that the Forms and Compass Schools' distinctions are false and misleading. He argued that it is incorrect to separate classical fengshui using these distinctions because all schools and systems of classical fengshui employ the fengshui compass (Yap, 2006d:7; 2007c: 7). Instead, he clarified that the correct distinction would be the "理气 *Liqi*" (theory and calculation of *qi*) and "峦头 *Luantou*" (landform fengshui) approaches. Representing a more "calculation-driven approach", the *Liqi* approach emphasizes the calculation of the *qi* movement in a property and determines the *qi* quality at a particular point in time. As for the *Luantou* approach, it focuses more on the use of physical landforms such as mountains and rivers, and prioritizes the discovery

[5] The Five Phases, known as "*wuxing* 五行" refer to wood, fire, earth, metal, and water that resemble five powerful forces in continuous cyclical motion and are governed by the orders of Mutual Production and Conquest. See Ho (1985).

of the "*longxue* 龙穴"（meridian spot） (Yap, 2007c: 7).

Yap also differentiated fengshui into the "*Sanhe* 三合" (Three Combinations) and "*Sanyuan*三元" (Three Cycles) fengshui systems (Yap, 2007c: 8). The *Sanhe* system examines the site based on the following four features: "*long*龙" (dragon), "*xue*穴" (meridian spot or lair), "*sha* 砂" (local eminences) and "*shuixing*水形" (watercourses). These features are analyzed in relation to the twenty-four directions, also known as "*Ershisi shan* 二十四山"（twenty-four mountains[6]）found on the fengshui compass (Yap, 2009: 139). The *Sanyuan* system, which is based on the cosmological systems in the *Yijing*, analyzes fengshui in time cycles known as "*yuan*元" that represents a time period of sixty years. Therefore, *Sanyuan* comprises three *yuans* that add up to a total of one hundred and eighty years (Yap, 2008a: 141). Apart from claiming that both the *Sanhe* and *Sanyuan* fengshui systems "represent the two original schools of fengshui", Yap also categorized them under what he terms "classical fengshui", which he defined as fengshui that utilizes techniques and methods from classical fengshui texts such as "*Qing Nang Jing* 青囊经" (Green Satchel Classics) and "*Dili Bianzheng* 地理辨正" (Earth Discern Study Truth) (Yap, 2007c: 2).

[6] The twenty-four mountains' directions represent a division of the fengshui compass face into twenty-four equal divisions. These divisions are represented by *Yijing* trigrams, heavenly stems, and earthly branches. See Aylward (2007).

3. The Development of Fengshui in Singapore

Given the dearth of local contemporary socio-historical studies on fengshui, I charted the development of fengshui in Singapore by studying particular fengshui trends, profiling local practitioners, and examining professionalization of the art. The fengshui trends include the decline of Yin Dwelling Fengshui, popularization of Yang Dwelling Fengshui, fengshui consumerism, and the syncretism of fengshui. In order to understand the local fengshui scene, I profiled practitioners whom I have engaged in my fieldwork and studied how local practitioners participated in the professionalization process. By synthesizing these various aspects, I aim to develop a contemporary socio-historical study of fengshui that will contextualize and facilitate my analysis of fengshui-scientization in Singaporean society.

3.1 Decline of Yin Dwelling Fengshui

Yin Dwelling Fengshui, or commonly known as grave geomancy, share a symbiotic relationship with burial practices. In occurring through the latter, grave geomancy reinforces the relevance and appeal of this mode of disposing the dead. However, the Singaporean government has discouraged burial practices by prioritizing land use and exhuming graves for infrastructural development. In doing so, the government has increased the economic and social costs of employing burial practices, which in consequence, increases those of grave geomancy as well. These costs, together with other disadvantages of grave geomancy, have diminished the appeal of such

practices and discouraged Singaporeans from adopting them.

The contestations over burial spaces were documented as having occurred during colonial and post-independence Singapore, from 1880 to 1930, and in the 1950s and 1960s respectively. In both eras, both the colonial and Singaporean states adopted a utilitarian attitude by viewing burial grounds as unhygienic spaces that could be better employed for developmental purposes. During the colonial period, the Chinese communities invoked burial grounds as sacred spaces and used fengshui prominently as a strategic discourse to protect their burial grounds from state interference. In the post-independence era, the Chinese however did not stress the importance of fengshui, but rather highlighted their legitimate rights in managing burial practices and their desire to cooperate with the state authorities on this issue (Yeoh, 1991; Yeoh and Tan, 1995).

Today, cremation has replaced burial practices as the favoured means of disposal of the dead in Singapore. To manage land scarcity, the Singaporean government has increasingly recommended cremation as a means of interment for Singaporeans. The government's priority of land use for urban development and housing has greatly decreased the available land for graveyards. This has made burial plots become expensive and their acquisition a tedious process in obtaining permission from the government. All these factors contributed to the preference for cremation over burial. For instance, of those who died before 1965, 89.8% were buried and only 10.2% were cremated. However, by 1998, the majority of the dead (61.8%) were cremated

and only 31.9% were buried (Tong, 2007: 206). The government succeeded in encouraging cremation because it could convince the people that cremation was the best option in land scarce Singapore. In addition, attractive alternatives such as crematoria and columbaria provided people with efficient and simple ways of disposing the dead. Finally, burial grounds were provided for those who insisted on burying their dead, thus mitigating feelings of being threatened or coerced into opting for cremation (Tong, 2007: 206).

Grave exhumations have also played an important role in discouraging burial practices in Singapore. A newspaper article reported that almost 2000 graves in Woodlands, which belonged to a Teochew cemetery dating back to the 1940s, were exhumed in mid-October 2008. These exhumations were to accommodate the construction of a planned MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) subway Downtown Line train depot that encroached on part of the graveyard. The remaining graves in the cemetery, which are estimated at between 2500 to 3000, would be exhumed at a later stage to facilitate the development of an industrial estate (See Appendix 2 pg 147). Such occurrences create undesirable implications for those who opt to bury their ancestors. According to Tong (2004), these people tended to equate their ancestral bones with ‘power’ that the descendants can only access by properly managing these bones. They would then seek to ensure the physical comfort of the dead by employing grave geomancy (Tong, 2004: 8). However, grave exhumations represent major disturbances that could nullify the ‘power’ of these ancestral remains and result in negative consequences for the descendants.

In addition, infrastructural development plans could precipitate more grave exhumations in future. For example, the Land Transport Master Plan has included future objectives such as building new underground expressways and doubling the MRT rail network to 278 km (see Appendix 3 pgs 148-149). Subsequently, graveyards located in areas earmarked for these infrastructural developments would mostly likely be exhumed. Thus, such uncertainty over the land tenure of burial sites would dissuade most people from adopting burial practices.

Besides the decline in burial practices, other factors have also reduced the appeal of grave geomancy. First, grave geomancy is subject to environmental influences: changes in soil conditions could cause the coffin to crack, while unpredictable floods or landslides could damage the tomb's fengshui. To avoid these contingencies, people tend to prefer the protected environment in the crematorium. Second, grave geomancy offers little agency; after the tomb is designed and sited, there is little else to be done except to hope that its fengshui remains effective and intact. Third, although local practitioners provide tomb-designing services to circumvent land scarcity, grave geomancy is still an expensive practice when they can charge about thirty thousand dollars to design a tomb, and another ten to thirty thousand dollars to construct it (T.N.P., December 10, 2007). If the tomb is damaged or deemed to have lost its fengshui efficacy, re-designing and re-siting it would entail similar costs. Such high costs would deter those who are unable or unwilling to pay for such practices. However, some clients continue to practise grave geomancy. For example, a newspaper article reported that South Korean politicians would

employ grave geomancy and re-locate their ancestors' graves in their bid to win the presidential elections (See Appendix 4 pg 150-151). Nevertheless, the high economic costs, land scarcity and appropriation of public land for development purposes have greatly reduced the appeal of grave geomancy in Singapore.

3.2 Popularity of Yang Dwelling Fengshui

Unlike grave geomancy, Yang Dwelling Fengshui is gaining popularity in Singapore. In view of its many schools and techniques, I define Yang Dwelling Fengshui simply as fengshui practices that are employed for configuring personal and professional spaces of the living (Bruun, 2008: 67). The popularity of this approach stems from how Singaporeans are utilizing it to manage their uncertainties and the manners in which practitioners have packaged the art accordingly to suit these needs. Significantly, Yang Dwelling Fengshui reflects the consumption culture in Singapore by allowing clients to satisfy personal choices of consuming fengshui artifacts and services. These actions not only help to create predictability in their lives but also complement their contemporary lifestyles.

A newspaper article on the geomancy business in Singapore reported that fengshui is gaining more popularity now. This is because practitioners can explain to their clients in English, which constitutes a significant development when most Singaporeans speak English and learn it as a first language in school. With available fengshui education, more Singaporeans have become

aware and knowledgeable about the art. Young clients are also turning to fengshui because they “feel unsettled” and want to be prepared for rapid changes by being “a little bit more foretold” about the future. Due to such concerns, clients subscribe to fengshui in order to enhance their sense of well-being in personal and work spaces. In addition to contemporary homes, practitioners have also customized fengshui for professional environments by synchronizing office seating arrangements and implementing fengshui features in common work spaces (see Appendix 5 pgs 152-154). By employing Yang Dwelling Fengshui in both personal and professional domains, practitioners have popularized this approach that enables clients to make choices, and exercise a sense of control over the uncertainties of life.

3.3 Fengshui Consumerism

Another attraction of Yang Dwelling Fengshui lies in its promotion of the consumption culture in Singapore. A main aspect of this fengshui approach involves the purchase and placement of particular fengshui artifacts in living spaces, of which their precise configured locations carry certain remedying effects. Purchasing fengshui artifacts fits consumption culture in Singapore, given that such purchases satisfy choices to garner predictability and accommodate contemporary lifestyles. When consumption ceases to be simply appropriating commodities for their utilities, it becomes a “consumption of signs and images” (Chua, 2003: 21). Moreover, consumption is to be regarded as “a process by which artifacts are not simply bought and “consumed”, but given meaning through their active incorporation in people's lives” (Jackson,

1993, quoted in Chua, 2000: 5). Thus, fengshui artifacts have become part of contemporary living by blending into living spaces that disguise their role as fengshui remedies. For instance, the waterfall feature is a common decorative feature that few people would readily perceive as a fengshui remedy for influencing the flow of *qi* in the area (see Appendix 5 pgs 152-154). With its increasing incorporation into contemporary living, fengshui artifacts are assuming both symbolic and practical significance in everyday life.

To promote fengshui consumption, practitioners have co-opted consumer products for fengshui purposes. In 2008, a renowned fengshui author and practitioner, Lillian Too, designed a fengshui hand phone that was advertised and marketed by a local telecommunications firm. This red-coloured hand phone sports a bejeweled dragon motif that is decorated with 288 zirconias. In her website, Too claimed that the dragon is a perfect way of energizing everything in the Year of the Rat, as it is the “powerful ally of the Rat”. Therefore, the nearby presence of the dragon when users conduct important businesses with this hand phone is one of the best ways to activate the dragon’s “noble cosmic chi”. Eventually, everyone can “borrow the Dragon’s luck” by simply possessing and using this hand phone (LuckyDragonPhone). This example illustrates how practitioners encourage fengshui consumption by advertising contemporary lifestyle products as fengshui commodities.

Lifestyle products aside, practitioners also commonly appropriate, commodify, and market religious and cultural symbols as fengshui remedies. From my observations, most clients would purchase these remedies for

fengshui purposes. In early January 2008, I attended a fengshui seminar on the coming Lunar Year of the Rat. During the seminar, the speaker Lillian Too advertised many artifacts symbolizing Tibetan Buddhist deities and symbols, such as the Medicine Buddha[7], Kalachakra symbol and mantra[8], as fengshui remedies (Too, 2008: 14, 22). Even though many participants seemed ignorant of these artifacts' religious significance, they nonetheless purchased many artifacts that Too recommended for various fengshui purposes[9]. This consumerist behaviour reflects the participants' tendency to err on the side of caution, which is characteristic of fengshui clients in choosing to "play it safe" (see Appendix 5 pgs 152-154).

In providing a myriad of fengshui artifacts for sale, practitioners enable their clients to participate actively in fengshui practices. This active engagement fulfills what I term a "buying insurance" mindset of purchasing fengshui remedies whenever clients wish to improve luck or remedy

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[7] The Medicine Buddha, also known as Bhaishajyaguru, comprises one of nine brother Medicine Buddhas including Shakyamuni Buddha. The Medicine Buddha is associated with healing practices that require believers to create an image of the Medicine Buddha and chant the Medicine Buddha Sutra (Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art.; Lipton; Ragnubs, 1995: 134-136). Similarly, Too advertised the purple Medicine Buddha statue and Medicine Buddha bracelet as fengshui remedies for sickness. She also advised that clients wearing the Medicine Buddha bracelet could increase its effectiveness by chanting the Medicine Buddha Sutra.

[8] The Kalachakra symbol, commonly known as the 'all-powerful-ten', consists of ten inter-locking or stacked symbols of the Kalachakra mantra. The symbolism of these ten syllables represents complex meanings that relate to all three external, internal and alternative aspects of the Kalachakra Tantra (Beer, 1999: 123-127). As illustrated in Appendix 9, this symbol has been commodified into a Kalachakra pendant and a home protection plague as fengshui remedies.

[9] One participant who sat beside me during the seminar had spent several thousand dollars buying these artifacts, which she justified with a 'better to be safe than sorry' attitude. After eliciting my fengshui advice on where to place these artifacts in her house, she then requested for my hand phone number on the pretext of wanting to invite me to her house for a fengshui consultation.

misfortune. These remedies act as long term premiums that are topped up whenever clients experience misfortune or unpleasant outcomes. Even when these remedies do not produce visible material rewards, they fulfill their function of providing psychological security that legitimizes the clients' purchases. Nevertheless, clients hope that the eventual payback in material rewards could justify investments in these regular premiums. Fengshui artifacts are also sold in fengshui franchises[10] and firms that are strategically located in major shopping and lifestyle malls[11]. By providing a range of secular, religious and cultural fengshui products, practitioners cater to the consumerist habitus of fengshui clients and sustain the momentum of such consumption behaviours.

Apart from fengshui artifacts, fengshui knowledge and education in the English medium have become readily available in books, websites, courses, seminars, and media coverage on the art. In chapter four, I examine intellectualization to analyze how and why practitioners convert and translate fengshui knowledge into textual sources. The plethora of fengshui knowledge and educational materials has not only increased fengshui awareness, but also encouraged clients to experiment with Yang Dwelling Fengshui. Even when mistakes occur, they can verify with textual sources and rectify mistakes on their own, such as re-locating fengshui remedies in the right living spaces. On

[10] As illustrated in Appendix 13, the World of Fengshui (WOFS) retail chain is one of the largest fengshui business franchises with 52 boutiques worldwide.

[11] For instance, one WOFS boutique is located in Vivocity while "Emblems of Fortune", a fengshui firm belonging to the Way OnNet Group, was officially opened in Orchard Central on 22 November 2009. Another fengshui group "*Yuan Zhong Xiu* 缘中秀" owns outlets in IMM building, Tiong Bahru Plaza, Century Square, White Sands, and Ang Mo Kio Hub.

the contrary, clients are less likely to experiment with grave geomancy due to scarce and inaccessible information on such practices, and high economic costs for remedying the wrong tomb design or site orientation. Yang Dwelling Fengshui also facilitates regularity of agency through its recourse to remedies and supposedly takes effect faster than grave geomancy[12]. Therefore, the former approach seems well-suited to address daily issues by allowing practitioners and clients to troubleshoot problems regularly with remedies, which not only involve less opportunity costs but take effect more quickly as well.

3.4 The Syncretism of Fengshui[13]

In my fieldwork, I observed that many practitioners would incorporate Taoist, Buddhist, and Tibetan religious elements into their fengshui practices. For instance, some practitioners commodify religious symbols and advertise them as fengshui remedies, while others employ Taoist rituals and talismans in their fengshui services[14]. However, such practices not only incline clients to

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[12] A practitioner asserted that the effects of Yang Dwelling Fengshui can materialize as quickly as within a week's time, while those of grave geomancy could require the time span of one family generation.

[13] I adopt Lee's definition of syncretism as the "combination of different forms of belief or practice beyond their categories or domains". Syncretism thus conveys the "possibility of commensurability amongst different worldviews" and results in "a melting pot whereby techniques, practices and ideas are mutually assimilated into one another to varying degrees" (Lee, 2002: 67).

[14] Teacher Yeo (one of my fengshui teachers who will be profiled later in this chapter) related one Taoist ritual called "*bai wufang* 拜五方" (praying to the five directions), which he performs as part of his fengshui services for clients moving into a new house. This ritual involves offering joss sticks, burning incense paper, and chanting prayers in the north, south, east, west, and centre sectors of the new house. He claimed that he uses these rituals to 'communicate' with the spiritual beings residing in the house and 'inform' them about the new residents. By establishing 'rapport' with the spiritual beings, he asserted that the new

perceive fengshui as Chinese religion but also discourage them from employing it due to religious implications. In chapter three, I will illustrate how some local practitioners attempt to circumvent these issues by employing religious and secular fengshui practices selectively. However, they are less successful in attracting middle-class Singaporean clients than those who offer secular fengshui services. The contrasting fortunes of these practitioners and the manner in which they practise fengshui will be examined in chapter three.

On the contrary, some fengshui scholars and practitioners have asserted that fengshui constitutes an amoral and a-religious practice. Apart from being defined as an amoral system that complements other religious and moral explanations (Freedman, 1964), some practitioners reiterated that fengshui has nothing to do with religion (Yap, 2006c: 4; 2007c: 5) and can be practised "regardless of any religious belief, culture, race and in any part of the world" (see Appendix 6 pgs 155-157). They have even made a distinction between "authentic" and "new-age" fengshui practices. In a newspaper interview, a local female practitioner criticized "pseudo" or "new age" fengshui as simply "marketing items" that supposedly bring good luck and using "gimmicks to cheat laymen". She then defined "authentic fengshui" as focusing on "matters of energy" and being personalized for each individual (see Appendix 6 pgs 155-157). This distinction exemplifies the 'authenticity debate' in which "classical" and "new-age" practitioners contest over what constitutes authentic fengshui. In chapter three, I will elaborate on this debate and demonstrate how

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residents could avoid being 'disturbed' by these beings, which play an instrumental role in ensuring that the new house and its residents would enjoy good fengshui. In addition to such rituals, Teacher Yeo also employs talismans in his fengshui practices for similar purposes.

classical practitioners engaged in instrumental rationalization and secularization to substantiate their criticisms of new-age fengshui, and propagate their classical fengshui approach. Chapter four will then demonstrate how they carry out the “de-syncretization” of fengshui by intellectualizing the art.

4. The Local Fengshui Scene

The study of fengshui-scientization involves an examination of the fengshui field in Singaporean society. Given that a field constitutes a series of social and political relations that determine the social positions of its agents (Bourdieu, 1977), a fengshui field refers to the social positions of practitioners within the fengshui industry, which determine how they appropriate the various forms of capital available in the field. Due to my limited social and cultural capital, however I could not penetrate the fengshui field, and identify the various social positions in the field. Subsequently, I focused on the local fengshui scene instead by participating in various fieldwork activities: attending fengshui seminars, conventions, and course previews, taking fengshui lessons, and accompanying practitioners on fengshui consultation visits. These activities enabled me to gain valuable insights on local fengshui trends and developments.

In addition, I have profiled my fengshui teachers later in this chapter to acknowledge their significant contributions to my fieldwork and also to document my fengshui learning process. Finally, I examined how local

practitioners professionalize fengshui through corporatization and institutionalization in order to achieve pragmatic goals, such as increasing membership, academicizing fengshui, improving the art's prestige, and legitimizing the fengshui profession.

4.1 Fieldwork in Singapore

To study fengshui comprehensively in Singapore, I carried out my fieldwork in three stages, which focused on public representations of fengshui, fengshui learning, and practice respectively. Therefore, I documented how practitioners portrayed fengshui in the public domain, learned fengshui from fengshui teachers, and observed how practitioners conducted fengshui practices. By adopting these various modes of analysis, I aim to develop a holistic perspective that not only incorporates both fengshui knowledge and practice, but also ensures that social action in one tradition can be viewed coherently by both practitioners and non-practitioners (Agar, 1986: 27).

In stage one, I participated in several public fengshui events comprising four fengshui seminars, three fengshui course previews and one International Fengshui Convention (IFSC 2008). At these events, I employed participant observation to document how practitioners portrayed fengshui in the public domain and influenced public perceptions towards it. These events were particularly useful, as I could interact with other practitioners who shared valuable insights on the fengshui industry. The audience at these events comprised mostly middle-class Singaporeans who were English-speaking

professionals ranging in their late twenties to late forties in age. These observations prompted me to investigate how and why fengshui appealed to these middle-class Singaporeans.

For stage two, I started learning fengshui by attending weekly fengshui lessons, revision classes, informal group discussions, and studying fengshui materials on my own. I attended fengshui lessons conducted by two full-time fengshui professionals and one freelance practitioner who are profiled in the following section. Informal group discussions with my teachers and fellow students also constituted a key source of learning. On my own, I analyzed fengshui educational materials such as texts, DVDs and documentaries, which were lent to me by my fengshui teachers, provided for by friends and family members, or borrowed from the national libraries. In this stage, I explored the educational domain of fengshui by learning the art and examining its modes of knowledge transmission.

In stage three, I focused on understanding and analyzing fengshui practices by accompanying practitioners on fengshui consultation visits. These visits were complemented by in-depth interviews that I conducted with my three fengshui teachers and three practitioners that lasted between forty-five minutes to one and a half hour. I also engaged in several informal discussions with three other practitioners whom I met at fengshui preview talks, seminars, and the IFSC 2008. My interactions with these practitioners not only facilitated my understanding of their fengshui practices, but also allowed me to contextualize these practices according to the fengshui-scientization

processes. Although I engaged a small number of practitioners in my study, nonetheless it facilitated the explicit interpretations of the meanings and functions of human actions through my interviews and field notes (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994: 248).

4.2 Learning from the Fengshui Teachers

As part of my fieldwork, I learnt fengshui from three fengshui teachers, Teacher Yeo, Teacher Ow, and Teacher Hung, who feature regularly in my thesis. Besides imparting their fengshui knowledge, they also shared freely with me their views on the fengshui profession and fengshui practices. Therefore, I have profiled them in acknowledgement of their teachings and opinions that have enhanced my knowledge of, and appreciation for the art. This section also documents my fengshui learning process that has played a central role in my understanding and analysis of fengshui in Singapore.

In 2006, I was introduced to Teacher Yeo by Teacher Low, who had taught me "*Ziwei Doushu*[15] 紫微斗数" (Purple Star Astrology) in 2004. Teacher Low had recommended that I learn *Qimen Dunjia*[16] 奇门遁甲" (Strange Gates Escaping Techniques) from Teacher Yeo. Subsequently, I learnt this

[15] *Ziwei Doushu* is an astrological technique that uses a person's birth particulars to locate cosmological stars in twelve houses that represent specific life aspects e.g. wealth. Teacher Low specializes in this technique and uses it for his fengshui consultations. See Harteam and Cheong (2001).

[16] *Qimen Dunjia* is a divination technique that was originally employed in military strategy and tactics. Together with the "*Liuren* 六壬" and "*Taiyi* 太乙" systems, they are collectively known as methods of the Three Cosmic Boards or "*Sanshi* 三式", which are regarded as China's highest metaphysical arts. See Ho (2003).

technique and also attended Teacher Yeo's *Yijing* divination class. After completing his courses, we kept in contact as he would update me on available cosmology talks and courses. Teacher Yeo is a full-time professional in his mid-fifties who co-owns a fengshui firm with a business partner. However, he appears more as a fengshui enthusiast who enjoys imparting his fengshui knowledge to pass time rather than a professional who is solely concerned with making a living. He attributed this attitude to his "rise and fall" in his career and related how he achieved material success in his early twenties by owning several private properties and managing a thriving construction business. However, his businesses failed due to cash flow problems. Subsequently, he obtained a diploma certificate in housing construction valuation from Singapore Polytechnic (a government funded tertiary education institution) and conducted courses on this subject in order to make ends meet and pay off his debts. It was during this trying period that he started researching intensively on Chinese cosmology.

In February 2009, I started attending his weekly fengshui lessons on an individual basis in his office where he taught me the *Xuan Kong* Flying Stars and Eight Mansions' techniques in Mandarin. These techniques were most relevant for my fieldwork, as they are most commonly employed by local practitioners. The lessons lasted about one and a half hours each, and with Teacher Yeo's permission, were recorded with an audio recording device for my learning and oral analysis purposes.

Besides teaching me fengshui, Teacher Yeo is also my primary respondent who has shared extensively his fengshui experiences and views. Learning from him yielded unexpected dividends of “informal learning sessions” during coffee breaks at a nearby coffee shop. I suggested this coffee break so that he could rest in-between the lesson when I could then solicit his views on fengshui informally. During these breaks, he would comment freely on different fengshui styles, power struggles among different practitioners, and advise on how to avoid conflict with fengshui contemporaries. Coincidentally, his former students would visit him at that time and join us for coffee. Such gatherings provided informal learning sessions where they would share their experiences as fengshui students and practitioners.

During one coffee break, I become acquainted with Teacher Ow. Like Teacher Yeo, she is a full-time professional who provides fengshui consultation services and teaches fengshui courses. I requested to attend her fengshui revision classes, which she kindly agreed to, and I also participated in her fengshui preview talks. Although bilingually proficient in English and Mandarin, she teaches primarily English fengshui courses in order to cater to an increasing demand among English-speaking Singaporeans who are keen to learn fengshui. In her early forties, Teacher Ow possesses a bachelor degree in religious studies and worked as an interior designer before setting up her fengshui firm. In her fengshui preview talks and revision classes, most attendees and students were middle-class Singaporean working professionals who spoke fluent English and were in their early thirties to late forties, not unlike those who participated in the public fengshui events that I attended in

stage one of my fieldwork.

I got acquainted with Teacher Hung through a friend who patronized his shop regularly. Despite only having secondary school education, Teacher Hung started his own retail business in his early twenties. Now in his fifties, he leads a semi-retirement lifestyle, and spends his free time learning and practising fengshui. We would meet regularly in his office where he would impart his fengshui knowledge. In addition to his array of Chinese fengshui texts, magazines, and newspapers, Teacher Hung also lent me his collection of fengshui documentaries that includes the popular Taiwan fengshui variety show "*Taiwan Miao Miao Miao* 台湾妙妙妙". This variety show featured different Taiwanese fengshui masters visiting the residences of people who have supposedly encountered many misfortunes. The fengshui master would then diagnose the situation and prescribe fengshui advice to alleviate the occupants' bad luck. This variety show series proved useful for my research, as it explained how and why some practitioners incorporated religious and cultural components into fengshui practices[17]. Such insights enabled me to identify with and understand similar local fengshui practices. Teacher Hung also invited me to accompany him on consultation visits to observe how he employed fengshui. After each visit, he would explain his interpretations and justify his rationale for carrying out certain fengshui practices.

[17] For instance, the fengshui masters claimed that the presence of spiritual beings in some residences was partly responsible for poor fengshui, and recommended the performance of religious rites to 'pacify' these beings as part of improving the house fengshui. They also illustrated how ancestral tablets and religious shrines located in the house affected the house fengshui and its occupants' luck. Subsequently, they provided advice on how to restore the conditions of these religious artifacts and re-establish 'protocol' in housing various deities in these shrines. In doing so, they asserted that the occupants would improve their house fengshui and enjoy good luck.

5. Professionalization

Based on my fieldwork observations, practitioners have actively engaged in professionalization by corporatizing and institutionalizing fengshui. They undertake corporatization by utilizing information technology to facilitate fengshui practices, developing a professional image to gain credibility, and acquiring organizational certifications to accredit fengshui firms and services. Fengshui becomes institutionalized when practitioners establish fengshui associations and academies, and organize fengshui conventions to encourage professional membership and academize fengshui.

In professionalizing fengshui, practitioners not only portray the art as a modern practice, but also attempt to academize fengshui knowledge, increase the art's prestige, and protect the vested interests of its members. Although such efforts represent visible aspects of fengshui-scientization, I argue that professionalization only plays an auxiliary role because it does not sufficiently explain modifications to the epistemological foundation, logic, and mode of accessing fengshui, or adequately justify the implications of ideological and institutional frameworks in Singaporean society for fengshui-scientization.

5.1 Corporatization

Practitioners have corporatized fengshui in various manners. To begin with, they leverage on information technology to facilitate fengshui services and popularize the art. In addition, they employ "impression management"

techniques to develop a professional image, acquire organizational certifications and focus on service quality to improve the organizational competency of fengshui firms. In these manners, they alter the appearance of fengshui by transforming it into corporate-style services that are delivered by credible fengshui service-providers.

5.1.1 Harnessing Information Technology

Practitioners have increasingly incorporated information technology to complement their fengshui practices. For instance, they employ technological gadgets, such as PDAs (personal digital assistant), personal computers and laptops to access and generate cosmological information quickly, and archive large amounts of information for consultation and reference purposes. They also create websites to disseminate fengshui information, provide online tools, known as “calculators”, for users to generate cosmological charts easily (Joeyyap.com) and allow members of the public to post fengshui-related queries.

Similarly, some practitioners have employed technological trends to popularize fengshui. For instance, Joey Yap uses the Twitter function to deliver updates to his students through the short message service (SMS) in mobile telephone devices. Alternatively, he documents his fengshui experiences and answers questions in his blog. By introducing these trends, practitioners strive to contemporize classical fengshui as a modern practice that can accommodate contemporary needs. Given the importance of

information technology in everyday life, these gadgets and trends help to promote fengshui knowledge and raise awareness of the art. Therefore, classical practitioners have even employed online learning services and encouraged e-learning behaviours to incline middle-class Singaporeans towards adopting individualized learning. These trends will be further explored in chapter four.

5.1.2 Adopting "Impression Management" Techniques

To improve public perceptions, practitioners have adopted "impression management" techniques and presented their public personae in a dramaturgical manner (Goffman, 1959). Instead of stereotypical Chinese gowns and cheongsams embroidered with dragon motifs, they now don business suits and appear as trendy, well-educated, and successful professionals. A newspaper article described a local female practitioner as a "well-heeled society lady" who wears classy jewellery and drives an expensive car. She cultivates a successful, modern, and young image by attending interviews with British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Channel News Asia (CNA) media corporations, making regular appearances in newspaper reports, and owning a client base ranging from corporations to yuppies. In debunking age and gender stereotypes of practitioners as old men dressed in Chinese gowns and carrying the fengshui compass, her public persona reiterates how fengshui may no longer be a traditional practice dominated by old men (See Appendix 6 pgs 155-157).

Other practitioners engage in dramaturgical behaviours by exhibiting various types of educational and cultural credentials to bolster their image. While young practitioners tend to advertise their university and postgraduate degrees, older practitioners would display diplomas for cosmology courses, membership certificates of Chinese metaphysics' associations, newspaper interviews, and photographs of their fengshui talks held at public venues. These qualifications are displayed to symbolize cultural capital in order to endorse their position as cultural experts, whom one respondent reverently addressed as "real fengshui masters".

5.1.3 Improving Organizational Competency of Fengshui Firms

Fengshui firms improve their organizational competency by attaining organizational certifications and focusing on service quality to satisfy clients' needs. For example, a local fengshui consultancy firm, Way OnNet Group, is the first fengshui consultancy firm to achieve ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 9001:2000 certification (WayOnNet). In providing the benchmark requirements for quality management systems, this certification is "now firmly established as the globally implemented standard for providing assurance about the ability to satisfy quality requirements and to enhance customer satisfaction in supplier-customer relationships" (ISO). Way OnNet has also created a bilingual Feng Shui portal in 2000, "which was a world first" in catering to the needs of both English and Chinese readers of current fengshui information and services (WayOnNet). These investments in organizational capabilities and service delivery represent how firms strive for

recognition by emphasizing service quality in, and garnering customer satisfaction for fengshui services. Subsequently, these measures enhance the professionalism of fengshui services and improve public perceptions of the art.

5.2 Institutionalization

The second aspect of professionalization involves how practitioners institutionalize fengshui by establishing fengshui associations and academies, and organizing fengshui conventions. Given that "[o]ne central process of professionalization is coalescence into a group" (Abbott, 1988: 11), fengshui associations facilitate this process by providing membership for practitioners and espousing common objectives. Fengshui academies and conventions, on the other hand, help to academize fengshui by promoting an academic approach towards the art, and advancing the value of its academic knowledge. In doing so, practitioners aim to increase the prestige of fengshui academic knowledge and sustain the jurisdiction of the fengshui profession.

5.2.1 Fengshui Associations

Fengshui associations serve the purposes of encouraging professional membership and endorsing common objectives to advance the art. For instance, the International Feng Shui Association (IFSA), a non-profit organization based in Singapore, was formed on May 8 2004 by "a passionate community of Feng Shui academics, experts and practitioners to spearhead the global cultivation, awareness and appreciation of Feng Shui" (see IFSA

website listed in bibliography). This association aims to enhance fengshui's image in terms of worldwide acceptance and credibility, unite the fengshui profession by bringing practitioners and organizations under a common banner, represent a channel for the exchange of ideas and professional experiences, and promote best practices in fengshui (see Appendix 7 pg 158). As a profession's social organization comprises three major aspects of groups, controls, and worksites, these associations function as professional groups that are not only organized around professional membership but also incorporate a wide variety of special interests within that membership (Abbott, 1988: 79). By joining such associations, practitioners become professional members who can partake in the objectives and interests of the association. In return, high membership figures would legitimize the association as a recognized and well-supported institutional body that can promote the interests of its members and the fengshui profession.

5.2.2 Fengshui Conventions

By organizing fengshui conventions, practitioners attempt to academize fengshui and promote the value of its academic knowledge. The following passage from Abbott (1988: 53-54) clearly explains why professionals strive to increase the prestige of their academic knowledge:

> *"The ability of a profession to sustain its jurisdiction lies partly in the power and prestige of its academic knowledge. This prestige reflects the public's mistaken belief that abstract professional knowledge is*

continuous with practical professional knowledge, and hence that prestigious abstract knowledge implies effective professional work."

Subsequently, he illustrates the use of academic knowledge and how it legitimizes professional work (1988: 54):

"In fact, the true use of academic professional knowledge is less practical than symbolic. Academic knowledge legitimizes professional work by clarifying its foundations and tracing them back to major cultural values. In most professions, these have been the values of rationality, logic, and science. Academic professionals demonstrate the rigor, the clarity, and the scientifically logical character of professional work, thereby legitimating that work in the context of larger values."

In this context, practitioners' efforts in academizing fengshui knowledge reiterate their participation in fengshui-scientization. For this purpose, some practitioners have inaugurated fengshui conventions in order to emphasize the academic value of fengshui knowledge and legitimize practical fengshui work. In 2004, the IFSA members founded the International Feng Shui Convention (IFSC): a two-day convention held annually in Singapore that consists of fengshui seminars, panel discussions, and presentations featuring renowned practitioners and academics. This convention is also open to members of the public who can attend by registering online and paying the registration fee (see footnote 18). In facilitating knowledge exchanges on fengshui, this convention has attracted interest groups from different countries. The IFSC 2008 featured

19 speakers on various fengshui topics and was attended by more than 500 delegates, including 100 overseas delegates from 23 countries (see IFSC website listed in bibliography). These facts and figures portray the IFSC as an international event that offers both specialist and academic perspectives on a range of fengshui issues.

Apart from popularizing the art, both the IFSA and IFSC serve the vested interests of its members. While IFSA non-executive members enjoy privileges such as subsidized rates for events like the IFSC[18], the IFSA executive committee members receive institutional accolades at the IFSC for their contributions to the fengshui industry. Since 2007, several IFSA executive committee members have been conferred the "International Feng Shui Grand Master" title that distinguishes them as eminent professionals of the trade[19] (see Appendix 7 pg 158). As institutionalized forms of cultural capital, these titles not only reinforce their positions in the fengshui field but also increase their ability to appropriate other forms of capital.

5.2.3 Fengshui Academies

Fengshui academies represent how practitioners attempt to academize fengshui by promoting an educational approach towards the art. For example,

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[18] The IFSC 2009 registration fee costs $148 for IFSA members, $268 for participants who register between 01 October 2009 to 14 November 2009, and $468 for walk-in participants. However, I did not register for the IFSC 2009 because I had used up most of my masters' research fund after paying $321 to participate in the IFSC 2008.

[19] The "International Fengshui Grand Master" title was inaugurated and presented during the IFSC 2007. By IFSC 2009, four IFSA and one non-IFSA practitioners have been conferred this title.

they institutionalize an academic style of fengshui learning by adopting an academic modular system. Besides offering a wide range of cosmology modules to facilitate multiple learning processes, this system also packages modular fengshui courses as being more legitimate and systematic than those taught on an ad-hoc basis, and with a less structured curriculum. Apart from the academic modular system, practitioners also utilize these academies to introduce other learning techniques, such as providing online resources, encouraging e-learning behaviours, and eliciting participation in online communities. Although fengshui academies constitute part of professionalization, I do not regard them as mere professionalization strategies adopted by practitioners. Rather, I identify these fengshui academies, its attendant learning processes and techniques, as constituting far greater significance in modifying the modes of learning and accessing fengshui, and inclining middle-class Singaporean clients towards individualization, which will be examined in chapter four.

In professionalizing fengshui through corporatization and institutionalization, practitioners have transformed the appearance of fengshui from that of a traditional art into a modern practice. In doing so, they aspire to achieve pragmatic goals of increasing the appeal of fengshui and protecting the vested interests of the profession. However, professionalization does not explain satisfactorily how the epistemological foundation, logic, and mode of accessing fengshui are modified, or account for the importance of the ideological and institutional frameworks in Singaporean society for fengshui-scientization. In order to address these issues, I will first examine

instrumental rationalization and secularization in chapter three, and then focus on intellectualization and individualization in chapter four.

CHAPTER 3:

THE INSTRUMENTAL RATIONALIZATION AND SECULARIZATION OF FENGSHUI

1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the first two key processes of fengshui-scientization, namely, instrumental rationalization and secularization. Together with intellectualization and individualization, these alterations to fengshui primarily account for the art's commensurability with the worldviews of educated middle-class Singaporeans. Instrumental rationalization functions as a major strategy employed by classical practitioners in their arguments against the new-age school. This polemic in the local fengshui field is most clearly seen in what I call 'the authenticity debate', in which the two dissenting groups of practitioners attempt to outdo one another in pushing for what each considers 'real' fengshui. The success of classical practitioners over the new-age school is the direct result of their replacement of the substantive aspects of fengshui with an instrumental logic that emphasizes the mastery of one's life through *calculation*. Classical fengshui is thus presented as an art structured by sets of formulae about how 'fortune' works, formulae that can be mastered and employed by any individual to achieve any desired end.

The instrumental rationalization of fengshui effectively removes any teleological prescriptions from fengshui knowledge. This leads to an attitude among practitioners reminiscent of Weber's description of the scientific

worldview that advocates the possibility of knowing: "…the knowledge or belief that if one but wished one could learn it at any time. hence (*sic*), it means that there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation" (Weber, 1958: 139). Instrumental rationalization thus implies a secularization of the practitioner's life-world, in which fengshui functions as a set of a-religious and amoral means to ends devoid of externally imposed purposes. Instead of employing what classical practitioners call "*mixin he xuanshu* 迷信和玄术" (superstition and mysterious arts), the emphasis has been shifted towards learning and applying fengshui formulae in a logical and systematic fashion. The instrumental rationalization and secularization of fengshui thus transform the art into technical knowledge and skills, rather than a traditional Chinese art carrying heavy religious, moral, and other 'cultural' connotations.

As mentioned earlier, the classical school has emerged victorious over the new-age school in its appeal to Singaporeans. I argue that this has a lot to do with the commensurability between classical fengshui's instrumental logic and its secular nature, and Singapore's ideological and institutional climate. When seen in this context, one finds an elective affinity between fengshui-instrumentalism and the ideology of pragmatism, and between fengshui and state secularism. Given that pragmatism has penetrated public consciousness and serves as a major decision-making strategy (Chua, 1983, 1985), fengshui instrumentalism appeals to the utilitarian attitude of the average Singaporean. Although, as Tong argues (2007), Singaporeans are generally religious in nature, classical fengshui appeals to them not because of

its emphasis on spirituality. Instead, the school has undertaken a more nuanced approach in distancing itself from all religious traditions. This not only allows classical fengshui to transcend religious boundaries and appeal to the pragmatist inside the Singaporean, it also frees the art from state regulations that govern religious practices. Taken together, instrumental rationalization and secularization fulfill the dual purposes of appealing to the worldviews of middle-class Singaporeans, and of remaining friendly towards both Singapore's ideological frameworks and institutional regulations.

2. Authenticity Debate

The authenticity debate on fengshui involves two groups of fengshui proponents known as classical and new-age practitioners. In this debate, classical practitioners justify their fengshui approach as authentic fengshui, while condemning new-age fengshui as pseudo fengshui. To substantiate their claims, the former propagate their approach as possessing a rationalized body of knowledge with verifiable origins and employing testable formulae. These qualities, they claimed, are proof of authentic fengshui because they enable its users to understand and practise fengshui in a systematic and logical manner. On the other hand, they accuse new-age practitioners of employing dubious fengshui practices that are not only textually-unverifiable but also illogical in nature.

The verifiability of fengshui knowledge represents one key aspect in the authenticity debate. Classical practitioners claimed that classical fengshui is

authentic because of its verifiable origins in classical fengshui texts written from the Tang dynasty (618-907) onwards in imperial China. On the contrary, fengshui practices without verifiable origins are considered fake and labeled as new-age fengshui. By professing classical fengshui texts as authentic fengshui sources, classical practitioners attempt to invoke these texts as textual authority to legitimize their approach. These actions exemplify how they engaged in fundamentalization to claim fengshui authenticity and legitimize their approach in the fengshui field, which will be elaborated in chapter four.

The second aspect of the authenticity debate concerns the logical explanation of fengshui practices. In his book on debunking religious and cultural myths, classical fengshui author Joey Yap recommended that people should ask themselves hard questions because it is the "fastest way to study and de-mystify Feng Shui" (Yap, 2005b: 38). He then questioned why cultural and religious symbols are employed as fengshui cures. For instance, Mandarin duck figurines have often been used as a fengshui cure for a poor love life, as they represent romance for the Chinese and symbolize matrimonial harmony (Too, 1999: 31). However, he disproved these figurines as fengshui cures because they neither emit *qi* nor alter the *qi* in the room or property. The use of Mandarin duck figurines constitutes an example of how new-age fengshui 'cures' are borrowed from "symbolism and cultural superstition rather than feng shui conventions" (Yap, 2008b: 18).

In addition to Mandarin duck figurines, Yap also criticized the claim that using mirrors in the bedroom causes third party relationship problems (Too,

1999: 32). This claim works on the principle that the mirror's reflection of the bed makes the room seem crowded, and therefore, increases the propensity for third party relationship problems. He argued that the principle is inconsistent with its application because since mirrors symbolize third parties in the bedroom, rather than "abundant passion and sex", then why should mirrors in the dining room represent "abundant food"(Too, 1999: 8)? In highlighting this inconsistency, he debunked this practice as "another feng shui love myth" that owed its continued existence to the "combination of Chinese superstition and the overactive imagination of some new-age fengshui practitioners" (Yap, 2008b: 146).

In their critique of new-age fengshui, classical practitioners also targeted the former's motley collection of religious and cultural components. Yap described how fengshui practices today have been inextricably associated with an assortment of lucky objects, symbols, cultural superstition, aspiration, and positive thinking. Fengshui has also been tarnished by commercialism and a retail aspect (Yap, 2008b: 6). He then attributed these developments to new-age fengshui, defining it as fengshui varieties that depend on "lucky objects, auspicious items, good luck symbols, cultural myths, crystals, space clearing, color therapy, and aspirational and transformational concepts" (Yap, 2008b: 17). This heavy orientation on the use of ornaments and objects has transformed new-age fengshui into "the art of object placement" (Yap, 2008b: 17).

Yap added that these characteristics reiterated how new-age fengshui does not concern itself with authentic fengshui techniques and methods, but rather is heavily involved with “pop psychology, superstition, and old wives’ tales” (Yap, 2008b: 18-19). Such preoccupations, he alleged, have fuelled many misconceptions about fengshui and its relation to religion. For instance, people viewed fengshui as “paganish” due to its inclusion of religious practices such as chanting, ritual, prayers, and emphasis on “believing” in the fengshui practice itself. Consequently, these associations with the ‘occult’ have caused people to grow skeptical about fengshui and not practise it. (Yap, 2008b: 8).

Classical practitioners also highlighted the deviations of new-age fengshui practices from classical fengshui principles as another set of evidence of the latter’s inauthenticity. In the Fengshui for Homebuyers DVD series (2006b), Yap used a fengshui concept, the “*Mingtang* 明堂” (bright hall), to demonstrate how new-age practitioners provided wrong fengshui interpretations. He explained that in classical fengshui, the bright hall represents an open space in front of the residence that enables *qi* to gather without obstruction. However, he claimed that new-age practitioners had misinterpreted this concept by encouraging clients to literally brighten up the bright hall with lights and crystals. Therefore, he accused these practitioners of misleading and confusing clients with such inaccurate interpretations. This example depicts how classical practitioners reinforce the validity of their approach by criticizing practices that do not satisfy their criteria of authentic fengshui. In creating such polemics, they attempt to raise fengshui awareness and create a demand for authentic fengshui. Subsequently, this demand could

incline clients to eventually disavow substantive fengshui practices when they cannot verify their origins or account for their internal logic.

3. Instrumental Rationalization

Rationalization has been recognized as a central feature of modernity. Weber associated the increasing rationalization of the world with what he called ‘dis-enchantment’. Of particular significance is the emergence of a form of rationality, which Weber called ‘instrumental rationality’ that is shared between capitalists and scientists. This commonality accounts for instrumental rationality’s dominance in industrialized western societies from the 19th to the 20th century. The increasing dominance of instrumental rationality over substantive rationality led to a prevailing approach towards reality as a machine governed by the principles of cause and effect. This attitude, embodied by modern science, promotes the questioning of all that is unquestionable and the knowing of all that is unknowable. The result is the de-mystification of reality into something that can be mastered through calculation. Despite its potential for human emancipation from the hold of religion, instrumental rationalization also leads to the conversion of ultimate ends, once prescribed by the Church, into means to ends – without offering any replacement for those ends that it has displaced. Modern life is thus one that is devoid of purpose because it has been purged of all that cannot and should not be known; the modern world is a disenchanted world.

Similarly, fengshui has undergone instrumental rationalization that involves the de-mystification of its mysterious and unverifiable components. To begin with, classical practitioners debunk religious and cultural myths present in fengshui prescriptions, which they allege as the cause of superstitious and illogical practices. They then recommend classical fengshui formulae, which not only substitute these practices but also increase the calculability of 'fortune'. In this manner, fengshui becomes more comprehensible as sets of rational techniques that can be mastered for harnessing 'fortune'. By favouring an instrumental logic over substantive values, practitioners are able to stress the predictability of fengshui formulae, while leaving the nature of the ends of these formulae unspecified. By emphasizing the technical aspects of fengshui within the authenticity debate, classical practitioners attempt to dominate the definition of fengshui in order to elevate their classical fengshui approach over the new-age style.

3.1 Instrumental Rationalization of Fengshui in Singapore

Local practitioners participate in instrumental rationalization in various manners. Some attempt to justify fengshui as a science in fengshui seminars and conventions, while others re-interpret and revise fengshui practices to increase its relevance and adaptability in today's context. Shared between them, however, is an emphasis on instrumental rationalization of the art. Subsequently, practitioners stress the scientific nature and practical aspects of fengshui to validate it as a goal-oriented practice, simplify fengshui practices to facilitate its application, and adopt a pragmatic approach by employing

fengshui to achieve desired ends.

3.1.1 Emphasizing Scientific and Practical Aspects of Fengshui

Practitioners have utilized fengshui conventions and preview talks to reiterate the scientific nature of fengshui. At the International Fengshui Convention 2008 (IFSC 2008) titled “Fengshui: Science, Culture or Superstition?”, the keynote speaker Lillian Too discussed whether fengshui constitutes science, culture or superstition. She legitimized fengshui as a science by highlighting its technical traits, such as its formulae and its use of the fengshui compass that enable practitioners to carry out calculations. As these technical dimensions of fengshui are shared by scientific disciplines such as engineering and medicine, therefore, she claimed, fengshui can be justified as science. However, she added that this justification is not fully substantiated, since fengshui departs from these scientific disciplines because it lacks the analysis and compilation of its body of knowledge under scientific conditions.

Too’s representations of fengshui as science are becoming common among local practitioners, who downplay or even omit substantive aspects from the art. These practitioners promote a message of empowerment in fengshui preview talks where they justify why people should learn and use fengshui. Most of them tend to advertise the art as a systematic form of knowledge with ‘objective’ principles that can be applied easily to solve everyday problems. In one Fengshui and *Bazi* preview talk, the fengshui speaker defined both fengshui and *Bazi* as systematic forms of knowledge that

reflect and incorporate everyday phenomenon. To emphasize fengshui's applicability to daily life, he defined it as knowledge that will empower clients to know "success and failure on the spot". Instead of dismissing fengshui as mere superstition, clients should respect it as the "science of nature and environment", that is, practical knowledge that endows on users the ability to recognize and master their environments.

Teacher Yeo is another example of those practitioners who elevate the instrumental over the substantive dimensions of fengshui. In his own Deng-ist words, he declared: "it does not matter what you choose to call fengshui, as long as fengshui works!" He regards fengshui as "*shiji xing xuewen* 实际性学问" (practical-based learning) because it incorporates the prevailing social, economic, political, and cultural conditions. In understanding these conditions, or what he calls "*shidai chaoliu* 时代潮流" (eras and trends), practitioners can better address clients' concerns and assist them with fengshui competently. He asserted that clients engaged his fengshui services not because of their substantive beliefs but simply because he can help them achieve their objectives. During a lesson break, Teacher Yeo's former student, Andrew, paid tribute to Teacher Yeo for helping him to "see the light" in Chinese cosmology. Previously, Andrew had spent considerable amounts of time and money learning from a renowned Hong Kong fengshui master. However, he felt confused and shortchanged by this fengshui master. Thereafter, Teacher Yeo cleared Andrew's doubts and provided philosophical advice for him as well. In recognition of Teacher Yeo's guidance, Andrew praised him as a master of the "*lingyan pai* 灵验派" (the efficacy school). He also hailed Teacher Yeo's

non-ideological approach as highly relevant in today's context because it incorporates "simple and effective methods that deliver results and yet do not infringe on people's beliefs". This example reflects how people tend to subscribe to fengshui more for its efficacy than for substantive reasons.

Within institutional settings, fengshui presenters also de-emphasized the substantive aspects of fengshui and emphasized its practical qualities instead. During the IFSC 2008, several practitioners and participants claimed that it was inconsequential to determine whether fengshui constitutes science. Rather, what mattered was whether fengshui produces results in its capacity as a goal-oriented practice. Therefore, they concluded that as long as fengshui produces results for its users, it did not matter what people choose to term it. A panelist even suggested teaching and using fengshui without mentioning the term itself. Based on his teaching experiences, his university students were receptive to his lessons even though they were unaware that he was teaching them fengshui. This suggestion illustrates how some practitioners perceived fengshui as possessing undesirable ideological baggage that could deter other people from employing it. To counter these perceptions, these practitioners engage in instrumental rationalization to make fengshui resemble science and reinforce its efficacy as a goal-oriented practice.

3.1.2 Simplifying Fengshui Practices

Some practitioners rationalize fengshui by simplifying its practices, and eradicating its unused and inexplicable components. In these manners, they

increase the practicality of fengshui by modifying it into sets of rational techniques for calculating 'fortune'. For instance, Joey Yap has produced a mini fengshui compass containing four rings of cosmological symbols and information, in contrast to the traditional fengshui compass that comes in various types and comprises between five to forty-two rings (Skinner, 2008). This "specially-crafted tool" also possesses other user-friendly attributes: an automatic alignment that gives users an accurate reading of the direction they are facing, a light weight of 100 grams, bilingual features in English and Chinese, and a compact structure that complements traveling purposes (Yap, 2009: 36). In addition, a comprehensive booklet is included to guide users in applying the Twenty-Four Mountains concept and Eight Mansions' technique competently. By discarding unused and inexplicable cosmological symbols on the fengshui compass, practitioners help fengshui enthusiasts to understand and carry out fengshui practices more easily.

During my fieldwork, I noticed that more practitioners are employing simplified tools for their practices. Even though Teacher Hung carries out regular fengshui audits, he admitted not knowing how to use the traditional compass. Nonetheless, he questioned the necessity for this "highly complex tool", given that he finds his scout compass to be 'good enough' for conducting his fengshui audits. Similarly, Teacher Yeo uses a simplified Chinese fengshui compass. He explained that such simplified compasses will suffice for the *Xuan Kong* Flying Stars and Eight Mansions' techniques, which require practitioners to obtain basic directions for calculation purposes. But he added that practitioners practising more complex fengshui techniques in the

Sanhe and *Sanyuan* fengshui schools would have to employ the traditional compass instead. Given the increasing simplification of fengshui today, he foresaw that fewer practitioners would employ the Chinese traditional compasses in future.

While teaching me various date selection techniques[20] in the "*Tongshu* 通书" (Chinese almanac), Teacher Yeo could not explain some information in certain sections. He justified that it is impossible to know everything in the Chinese almanac, as it contains a wide range of cosmological knowledge passed down from antiquity. However, he asserted that practitioners could still utilize the Chinese almanac accordingly to fulfill clients' needs. When I asked about the unused and inexplicable components in the Chinese almanac, he claimed that they were more relevant for the 'olden days', which partly explains why few practitioners understand or use these components nowadays. Therefore, he suggested that practitioners could pay less attention to these components and instead focus on those that can be understood and applied easily. In doing so, the practical value of particular cosmological techniques would increase when more practitioners and enthusiasts can employ them and appreciate their relevance.

Teacher Yeo then demonstrated how fengshui knowledge can be simplified to provide convenience for clients. For instance, he reduced the

[20] Teacher Yeo taught me the 12 Day Officers 十二值神 (*Shier Zhi Shen*), the 28 Constellations 二十八宿(*Ershiba Xiu*) and "*Donggong* 董公" techniques. He also advised me on how to incorporate *Bazi* into these date selection techniques. See (Yap, 2007a, b).

complexity in date selection processes by identifying all the auspicious dates in a mini calendar, which he prints in a telephone booklet used for advertising his professional and fengshui services. His mode of identification involves using circles to mark "*daji* 大吉", or highly auspicious dates and boxing "*ji* 吉", or auspicious dates in squares (see Appendix 8 pg 159). Subsequently, clients could employ these identified dates for preliminary considerations before submitting their preferred dates for his 'final confirmation'. Similarly, he uses various symbols to identify auspicious fengshui sectors in clients' residence and office floor plans: a circle represents an 'active' wealth sector; a triangle marks a 'passive' wealth sector; a rectangle containing a triangle indicates suitable bed locations; and a lollipop symbol highlights where fengshui pendants should be placed to diffuse negative qi (see Appendix 9 pgs 160-164). In this manner, he explained, clients could rely on their floor plan for reference and follow up activities, overcome common problems of forgetting the locations of the fengshui sectors, and in 'activating' the right sectors for specific purposes. Such identifications, he added, prove how practitioners could solve clients' problems by simplifying highly complicated information and providing relevant services for them.

3.1.3 Adopting a Pragmatic Approach towards Fengshui

The instrumental rationalization of fengshui also involved how practitioners adopted a pragmatic approach towards the art. Teacher Yeo described some practitioners who practised fengshui simply as a practical means to achieve material ends. He concluded that they learned fengshui to

compensate for poor educational qualifications and earn a living. In adopting a pragmatic attitude towards fengshui, they would simply acquaint themselves with one or two cosmological techniques before proceeding to ply their trade. Subsequently, they would strategically conceal their limited knowledge and exaggerate fengshui's efficacy to attract clients.

Teacher Yeo then elaborated on how these practitioners can practise fengshui simply by using the annual flying stars technique and why most practitioners prefer this technique. First, this technique does not require practitioners to ascertain the sitting and facing orientations of living spaces, which can be difficult. Second, the annual flying stars manifest their effects more quickly, which are more readily felt within that particular year. In contrast, the stars in the *Xuan Kong* Flying Stars system take a longer time to manifest its effects because they are 'in charge' for twenty years. This interpretation differs from some western fengshui authors who claimed that the twenty-year period stars of this fengshui system exert the strongest fengshui effects (Skinner, 2003: 136). However, Teacher Ow also agreed with Teacher Yeo and even advised me to "forget about *Xuan Kong* flying stars, use annual flying stars technique alone is good enough!"

Given its simple and user-friendly attributes, the annual flying stars technique has enabled many practitioners to conduct fengshui practices easily. This is why, Teacher Yeo alleged, many professionals providing fengshui services for a fee can still "*pao jianghu lai zhuanchi* 跑江湖来赚吃" (roam

the 'pugilistic world' to make a living[21]) even though they knew little about the *Yijing* or *Bazi*. In showing disdain for these practitioners who tend to exaggerate the efficacy of fengshui, he described their behaviours as "*ba fengshui dangchen shi neng feitian dundi de zhishi* 把风水当成是能飞天遁地的知识" (to regard fengshui as knowledge that can fly to the sky and tunnel beneath the earth). This means that they portrayed fengshui as knowledge that entails supernatural powers. Thus, he held them responsible for obscuring fengshui and causing people to misunderstand the art, and stereotype it as mere superstition or quackery.

Teacher Yeo also clarified that the annual flying stars technique, which can be found in the Chinese almanac, shares similar origins with other cosmological techniques[22]. He added that although the annual flying stars technique does not belong specifically to any fengshui system or approach, its easy application and fast efficacy makes it highly popular among practitioners who want 'quick results', and those who practise fengshui without acquiring a firm foundation in Chinese cosmology.

Teacher Hung exemplifies practitioners who belong to the latter group. I asked him why he did not employ the *Xuan Kong* Flying Stars technique in his

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[21] "*Jianghu* 江湖" is a term that literally means 'rivers and lakes', but contains allusions to "*wulin* 武林", the pugilistic community, and the dog-eat-dog political nature of human society. Implied within the notion of *jianghu* are also references to the serious consequences of defeat, of having to know the rules of political games, and of the importance of "*guanxi* 关系" or social capital. Subsequently, "跑江湖来赚吃" connotes that one would have to do whatever it takes to make a living in a precarious world.

[22] He postulated that it is highly probable that the annual flying stars technique originated from *Qimen Dunjia* due to their common emphasis on numerically similar auspicious stars.

fengshui practice. He replied that this technique was “troublesome and complicated” when compared to the “accuracy” and “user-friendly” nature of the annual flying stars. To substantiate his claim, he credited his friends’ lottery luck and their children’s academic success to his annual flying stars calculations. These “successes” thus validated his decision to employ this technique alone, which typified his pragmatic orientation towards employing the art. When I queried about his *Yijing* and *Bazi* knowledge, he replied candidly that “learning too much” can be confusing and counter-productive for his practice. Therefore, he has decided to “keep things simple” by not learning too much Chinese cosmology and keeping to the annual flying stars technique. As long as the technique works, he did not see the need to learn or use other techniques. If it does not, he added, it would be easier to troubleshoot what could have gone “wrong” in his calculations.

The example of Teacher Hung reflects how practitioners who produce ‘results’ that meet clients’ expectations are regarded as being competent regardless of their cosmological background. This trend reinforces the perceptions of fengshui as a goal-oriented practice that correlates practitioners’ credibility with their ability to satisfy clients’ needs. Practitioners themselves also choose to emphasize results over their cosmological background as the benchmark of their competency, which affirms how fengshui has been modified as a rational means for pragmatic ends. Despite their participation, however, practitioners are not solely responsible for the instrumental rationalization of fengshui in Singapore. To a greater extent, the latter’s development is motivated by its affiliation with specific conducive existential

conditions in Singaporean society, such as the ideology of pragmatism. Pragmatism not only represents the operationalization of instrumental rationality but also constitutes an important ideological value in Singaporean society. This ideology manifests itself in how Singaporeans make decisions on health, education, and language proficiency issues that illustrate how they adopt instrumental rationality to achieve their objectives.

4. Pragmatism

Pragmatism, which scholars perceive as a ‘non-ideological’ ideology (Chan and Evers, 1972; Chua, 1985), was adopted by the political leaders to resolve Singapore’s predicaments in the early years of independence. In order to ‘survive’, the political leaders, led by Lee Kuan Yew, enforced policies as ‘pragmatic’ means that lacked ideological content and were used solely for reconstructing Singaporean society. Pragmatism was also politically expedient as a regional symbol of neutrality. Given Singapore’s ethnic Chinese majority, developing a national identity along ethnic lines would attract animosities from neighbouring Malay-Muslim countries of Malaysia and Indonesia, while the presence of Western forces and Singapore’s participation in global capitalism for economic survival prevented Singapore from incorporating socialist ideologies (Hill and Lian, 1995: 37). The only viable option was to base the identity on an ‘ideology of pragmatism’, which would circumvent using nationalistic or ethnic models, or those founded along a socialist/capitalist dichotomy. This allowed Singapore to avoid embroilment with any regional ideological conflict while pacifying its various local ethnic

and religious congregations. In view of these considerations, pragmatism represented a practical means for Singapore to achieve its end goal of 'survival'.

Most Singaporeans are guided by pragmatism in their decision-making processes, given that they tend to adopt an instrumental logic in making life choices. To understand the importance of pragmatism in their everyday lives, we can observe how Singaporeans make their decisions in healthcare, education, and language proficiency issues. These examples affirm how their behaviours are governed more by pragmatic calculations rather than being driven by the pursuit of immediate gratification. In illustrating how Singaporeans adopt pragmatism as an ideological expression of instrumental rationality, I argue that the instrumental rationalization of fengshui appeals to the worldviews of middle-class Singaporeans by reiterating existential conditions that manifest as certain ideological and institutional components within Singaporean society.

4.1 Pragmatic Behaviours of Singaporeans

In the area of healthcare, most Singaporeans exhibit behaviours that seem to be influenced by pragmatic rather than aesthetic or substantive concerns. In his research on alternative 'new-age' therapeutic systems in Singapore, Lee (2002) concluded that in addition to their aesthetic values, middle and upper middle-class Singaporeans are mainly attracted to the efficacy of these systems. Similarly, Quah's (1989) research in the 1980s claimed that

Singaporeans are pragmatic in terms of deciding on which alternative medicines to use. She observed that they are not concerned with what traditions the healing methods belonged to, as long as the healing is efficacious for them. These preferences reveal Singaporeans' pragmatic attitudes towards medical treatment that prioritize its efficacy over other considerations.

Such pragmatic behaviours are also exhibited in other areas, such as choosing one's education and improving one's language proficiency. In deciding one's education, most Singaporeans would choose to enroll in university degree courses that offer marketable degrees and warrant a higher salary. For instance, business administration, engineering, and accountancy degree courses are preferred over arts and social sciences' ones, as the former are deemed to possess a higher "market value" than the latter. Older Singaporeans, too, would approve of their children choosing the former courses, while viewing the latter as less effective in securing a promising and high paying job after graduation. Education is thus viewed as a means to an end, as both parents and students perceive education as mere investments for greater economic returns, while disregarding intrinsic rewards in the learning process itself.

After the recent sub-prime economic crisis, Singaporean students demonstrated their pragmatic orientation in response to this global financial catastrophe. In one newspaper article, it was reported that the six-figure salaries that banks were offering fresh graduates in recent years have

encouraged many university applicants to make business courses their first choice of study. However, the current recession has caused Singaporean students to rethink their degree choices and shift away from business degree courses, to arts and social sciences' ones, in order to secure positions in the teaching industry and the civil service. This response is in reaction to the predicaments of final year students who failed to land jobs, let alone a high paying one in a bank. These gloomy scenarios have provided a "reality check" for applicants who subsequently changed their course choices accordingly. For instance, after hearing how his business graduate cousin had difficulty landing a job, one 'GCE' A-level (General Certificate of Education Advanced Level) holder who was initially keen on the business course, applied for an arts and social sciences course instead:

> '*It's quite scary how my cousin went for half a dozen job interviews and has yet to land anything. So I told myself I have to be realistic,' he said. 'The banks are laying off people, but the Government is hiring. With a BA, I can go into the civil service or teaching, which I don't mind because I like dealing with young people*.' (see Appendix 10 pgs 165-166).

Pragmatism is not merely a decision-making philosophy of Singaporeans, but also of the state. The Ministry of Education has explicitly reiterated that economic circumstances are the primary motivational force behind the design of the national educational curricula, often justifying it with the word "relevance". For example, the then Minister of State for Education commented recently that "*Our higher education system is also unapologetically…closely*

attuned to the need to make education relevant to help Singaporeans find a job and remain employable. This gives them confidence that the education they have received is meaningful" (see Appendix 11 pgs 167-168). It is notable that the state equates the meaningfulness of education with its pragmatic economic purpose, which is reproduced in Singaporeans' behaviours. The state's pragmatic attitude towards education is also seen in recent additions to university programmes like the life sciences, media design, double degree in biology, and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). These are what I consider highly instrumental-rational solutions to the volatile situation of a country deeply intertwined with the global economy.

With China's increasing profile and growing importance in the global arena, the state has been reiterating the importance of gaining proficiency in Mandarin. These reiterations have occurred in a slew of Speak Mandarin campaigns, with the latest campaign bearing the "*huayu ku*! 华语酷！", or "Mandarin Cool!" slogan. Consequently, Singaporeans (including the non-Chinese) attempt to improve their Mandarin proficiency by revising or learning the language, attending courses that teach business or conversational Mandarin, or enrolling their children in additional Mandarin classes. However, Singaporeans undertake these choices in concurrence with the state's rationale of Mandarin proficiency as being the passport to better career prospects, rather than simply pursuing aesthetic interests in learning the language. For example, a newspaper article noted that the bilingualism debate has been "tempered by geopolitical realities" in recent years. "*The rise of China has melted away much of the resistance of those from English-speaking backgrounds towards learning Chinese, now that they see its economic value*". This change in

attitude is also evidenced by the rising number of students who opt to study Higher Chinese. Last year, about 27 percent of GCE O-level (General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level) candidates took this subject, as compared to 19 percent two years ago (see Appendix 12 pgs 169-173). These instances reiterate how Singaporeans tend to pursue their language preferences as an instrumental means to achieve practical ends.

4.2 Pragmatism and Middle-Class Singaporeans

The above-mentioned examples reflect how Singaporeans are receptive towards the ideology of pragmatism. I argue that in particular, middle-class Singaporeans are more likely to adopt pragmatism because in possessing cultural and economic capital, they can make choices that could help secure for themselves upward social mobility. As a social category that most Singaporeans use to describe themselves and their families, the 'middle-class' term is also used by the ruling elite to characterize Singaporean society as a whole (PuruShotam, 1998: 128-129; Tan, 2004). Although this term constitutes a general category, middle-class Singaporeans can be identified in the following manners. First, they possess a vast range of choices from which to gain and undergo continual advancement. Second, they must make relevant choices from this range to ensure that these choices "must add up to a complex whole". Third, these choices must be weighed by realistically appraising possibilities in the Singaporean context, given that the wrong choices could cause the loss of upward social mobility (PuruShotam, 1998: 128-129). Therefore, middle-class Singaporeans are inclined to adopt pragmatism as a means to achieve upward social mobility. Subsequently, the transformation of

fengshui as practical means could appeal to their pragmatic orientations of achieving better ‘results’ and attaining higher social status in Singaporean society.

5. Secularization

Chapter two illustrated how practitioners have contributed to the syncretism of fengshui by incorporating religious and cultural influences into fengshui practices. In response, classical practitioners not only questioned such syncretic practices in the authenticity debate, but also engaged in instrumental rationalization and secularization to de-mystify fengshui, and transform it into an a-religious and amoral practice. In order to secularize fengshui, practitioners undertake ‘de-spiritualization’ and ‘de-teleolization’ by debunking the influence of spiritual forces in fengshui, and dissociating the art with issues of ultimate ends respectively. In defining religion as a set of practices that facilitates communication with non-empirical sentient beings, ‘de-spiritualization’ involves eliminating the relevance of spiritual beings and components in fengshui. For instance, classical practitioners criticize the use of religious and cultural artifacts as fengshui remedies, and chanting of religious mantras to increase the efficacy of fengshui practices.

Although fengshui has been defined as an “amoral explanation of fortune lying alongside a moral explanation of Confucian, Buddhist and other moral orders in the universe” (Freedman, 1964: 211), the instrumental rationalization and secularization of fengshui have replaced these religious and moral orders

with an a-religious perspective that complements fengshui's amoral explanation of fortune. Subsequently, classical practitioners not only justify fengshui as an instrumental tool for acquiring fortune, but also carry out 'de-teleolization' to disprove the art's association with ontological and other-worldly issues.

Besides dissociating fengshui from spirituality and religion, secularization also entails important implications for the art. First, it removes ideological prohibitions that hinder clients from engaging fengshui services. Second, the absence of religious, cultural, and moral prescriptions allows practitioners to emphasize the utility of fengshui as an instrumental means for achieving desired results. Subsequently, fengshui becomes sets of rational techniques that facilitate the calculation of fortune, rather than a cosmological model depicting the nature of reality. More importantly, its conformity to the Singaporean state's secularism provides exemption from religious regulations and empowers practitioners with more freedom to define and propagate the art. As I will illustrate later in this chapter, these implications have inclined educated middle-class Singaporeans to favour secular fengshui services.

5.1 Religious Revival and Fengshui Secularization in Singapore

Tong's (2007) research showed that Singapore is experiencing a religious revival due to religious competition and conversion among Singaporeans. However, a parallel revival of spirituality did not occur in fengshui circles. Instead, fengshui secularization has developed rapidly in spite of increased

religiosity among Singaporeans. Tong attributed religious revival in Singapore to several changes, such as the “rationalization” and “intellectualization” of religion that have inclined more Singaporeans towards greater religiosity (Tong, 2007: 4). He concluded that Singaporeans have become more religious as a result of these changes. On the contrary, fengshui-scientization, which also includes instrumental rationalization and intellectualization, discourages Singaporeans from adopting fengshui as part of their religiosity. Therefore, they are more likely to engage fengshui as a secular, rather than religious or spiritual practice. In spite of these trends, some fengshui academics have nonetheless attributed fengshui popularity to the growth of spirituality. For instance, Bruun identified the increasing tendency towards religious or spiritual revival in the world today as a key motivation behind the transformation of fengshui into a global phenomenon (Bruun, 2008: 5). However, I will counter Bruun’s claim by demonstrating how secularization has resulted in the increasing popularity of fengshui in Singapore.

5.2 Secularizing Fengshui in Singapore

In contrast to instrumental rationalization, secularization has revealed contrasting attitudes and behaviours among local practitioners. In my fieldwork, I observed that they exhibited varying degrees of secularity in their fengshui practices to appeal to different clientele. For instance, practitioners who propagate secular fengshui practices appeal mostly to educated middle-class Singaporeans, while those employing religious and cultural fengshui practices cater more to working-class Singaporeans. In addition,

some practitioners tend to emphasize fengshui's secularity in a selective manner, which I term "selective secularism". Subsequently, practitioners who offer secular fengshui services are more successful in attracting middle-class Singaporean clients than those who practise selective secularism. Nonetheless, some practitioners continue to employ selective secularism due to practical considerations of catering to their existing clientele and safeguarding their status as cultural experts.

5.2.1 Secular Fengshui Services

In recent years, classical fengshui has gained popularity, with more clients purchasing its educational fengshui books and DVDs, and attending its fengshui seminars and courses. This popularity is partly attributed to the start of a "feng shui revolution" by classical practitioners to displace the practice of "object placement" commonly associated with fengshui, promote the art as "free of cultural elements and superstition" (Yap, 2008b: 6), and portray it as being "faith-free and religion-free" (Yap, 2008b: 8). This fengshui revolution exemplifies how they distinguish their approach by promulgating fengshui secularity as a key feature of authentic fengshui. In doing so, they encourage clients, in particular middle-class Singaporeans, to consume classical fengshui.

Similarly, local fengshui services espousing a secular approach have been well-received by Singaporeans. For example, the Singapore Fengshui Centre (SFSC) has been providing fengshui certified courses in conjunction with the Singapore Polytechnic since 1998. Upon completion of these courses,

fengshui learners are awarded Certificates and Professional Certificates of Practice in Basic Science of Fengshui. These courses have become highly popular and grown in its enrollment over the years. According to one Chinese newspaper report, the 1998 inaugural fengshui class had less than twenty participants. Today, this class offers three intakes annually, of which each intake can attract close to forty participants (see Appendix 13 pgs 174-175). By early January 2010, the Certificate of Practice in Feng Shui course would have commenced its 42nd intake (SFSC).

As educational institutions constitute secular common spaces (see Appendix 14 pgs 176-180), the joint issuance of accredited certificates with the Singapore Polytechnic endorses the secularity of the SFSC fengshui courses. The SFSC also reiterates in its website that “the study of Feng Shui is complementary to most professions and religious beliefs” (SFSC). This position reinforces its approach of “offering the most scientific and effective means” to enhance people’s “living and working environment to create optimal harmony” (SFSC). Although each SFSC fengshui course costs S$1700 and is taught entirely in English, its popularity affirms that Singaporeans favour a scientific and secular fengshui approach. Based on the cost and language orientation of such courses, it is highly possible that most participants are educated middle-class Singaporeans who would possess the cultural and economic capital to attend these courses.

5.2.2 Selective Secularism

While some local practitioners advertise the secularity of fengshui to attract clients, others offer secular and religious fengshui practices selectively to attract new, and accommodate existing clientele. The following examples will demonstrate how these practitioners employed their practices in a selective manner. Teacher Yeo perceived fengshui as a practical-oriented knowledge that should constantly incorporate other forms of knowledge. He often criticized practitioners who exaggerate fengshui as an omnipotent practice that guarantees positive results because he has witnessed how they employed such claims to manipulate clients for financial gains. Such unscrupulous actions, he lamented, have fostered conceptions of fengshui as mere superstition and quackery.

Contrary to popular belief, Teacher Yeo has always regarded fengshui as a secondary factor in influencing one's life. He would always remind me that fengshui constitutes "*xiaodao*小道" (small dao[23]), meaning that it can only fulfill a subordinate role in assisting one's advancement in life. Therefore, practitioners should be mindful that fengshui itself cannot ensure one's success in life. Instead, factors such as education and hard work are more pivotal in improving one's life chances. To validate his point, he would often ask me "given the many Singaporeans who are university graduates, how many of

[23] "*Dao* 道" refers to the most fundamental building block of the universe that "*Lao Zi* 老子" defined as "that by which anything and everything comes to be" (Feng and Bodde, 1948: 95). However, what Teacher Yeo meant was what Chinese philosophers described as the "Tao (Way, or basic principles) of sageliness within and kingliness without" (Feng and Bodde, 1948: 8). In this context, he perceived fengshui as constituting a secondary principle in enabling people to cultivate virtue and achieve worthy accomplishments in life.

them acquired university education because they utilized fengshui?" The purpose of this question was to reiterate the likelihood that most Singaporeans do not solely rely on fengshui to achieve life goals. His revised interpretation of fengshui was to disavow what he calls "*dui xuanxue de mixin guandian* 对玄学的迷信观点" (a superstitious perspective towards Chinese cosmology).

Even though Teacher Yeo defined fengshui as a secular practice, he exhibited contradictory behaviours on other occasions. For instance, Teacher Hung related how he had employed fengshui to help his nephew in his academic studies. He claimed to have activated the "*Wenchang xing* 文昌星" (literary star) by hanging four calligraphy brushes in the south-west corner of his nephew's room, which eventually, he asserted, helped his nephew gain admission into a local university and achieve exemplary results. Feeling curious and somewhat hopeful, I consulted Teacher Yeo on how to activate the literary star in order to improve my chances of excelling in my coming examination. To my surprise, he laughed and advised me to simply exercise diligence in my academic studies. This is because he perceived people who relied on the efficacy of the literary star as being lazy in their studies and therefore, adopted the attitude of "*linshi bao fuojiao* 临时抱佛脚" (carrying the Buddha's leg at the last moment), meaning someone who makes desperate efforts at the last moment to salvage a situation. However, I clarified that I merely wanted to verify Teacher Hung's claim, and hopefully gain an 'edge' over my classmates. In response, he smiled and told me "not to be so superstitious", and just work hard to achieve good grades.

Despite emphasizing fengshui's secularity, Teacher Yeo believes that fengshui can never be divorced from Chinese culture. Due to his Taoist beliefs, he acknowledges the presence of spiritual influences, and therefore continues to use cultural pendants and religious talismans. These techniques are part of his advice to me in how to go about minimizing negative fengshui influences. For example, he related that many practitioners would consider "*er wu jiaojia* 二五交加" (Two Black and Five Yellow Stars Fengshui Combination) the most malevolent combination in *Xuan Kong* Flying Stars system (Skinner, 2003: 120). Even though these two stars symbolize sickness and misfortune, however he saw no reason to worry unduly over them. This is because one could diffuse the strength of these stars by hanging metal artifacts, such as a metal pendant or a metal "*hulu* 葫芦" (gourd) in the spaces where these stars resided (Skinner, 2003: 120). Alternatively, one could also curb human activities in these affected spaces in order to minimize the stars' negative effects (Skinner, 2003: 125).

Teacher Yeo also recommends his clients to buy his self-designed metal pendant, which is inscribed with fengshui symbols and auspicious phrases, to dissipate negative fengshui influences. To enhance the efficacy of these pendants, he conducts simple rites for performing "*kaiguang* 开光" (opening the light). In a *kaiguang* ceremony, religious artifacts are infused with 'power' by bringing 'consciousness' into these objects (DeBernardi, 2008: 63). Claiming that most practitioners would undertake such practices, he disclosed that Teacher Ow has collected talismans from him on several occasions for

fengshui purposes. Such practices contradicted her portrayal of fengshui as a secular practice in her preview talks.

Similarly, I also observed such contradictory behaviours at the IFSC 2008. In most seminar sessions and discussion panels, the fengshui speakers attempted to justify fengshui as science. However, Way OnNet Group, a local fengshui firm founded by Grand Master Tan Khoon Yong, advertised certain products at its exhibition booth as “emblems of fortune” that possessed magical powers. According to its brochures, “the magical powers of ammonites” would bring good luck and fortune for users who could choose specific types to enhance particular aspects of their lives. Such ambivalent behaviours of local practitioners could be motivated by their unwillingness to fully secularize their practices due to several considerations.

To begin with, fengshui secularization could result in heavy economic losses when religious and cultural artifacts are no longer sold as fengshui remedies. During his IFSC 2008 presentation, Grand Master Tan informed the audience that the sale of “symbolic fengshui” artifacts had contributed $1 million to his firm’s revenue in 2007. Also, I noticed that these practitioners’ clientele comprised mostly Taoists and Buddhists who can identify with the former’s fengshui practices that employed Taoist and Buddhist religious artifacts as fengshui remedies. By fully secularizing their fengshui practices, these practitioners could risk alienating this existing clientele and even lose their patronage.

In addition, the eradication of substantive components in fengshui could affect the reputation of some practitioners who are recognized as specialists in

Chinese culture and religion. For instance, Grand Master Tan is also known as a "*minsu ji*a 民俗家" (folk culture expert), while Teacher Yeo is renowned for his proficiency in Taoist rituals and talisman-writing. Thus, secularization could invalidate the relevance of their expertise that would in turn reduce their cultural and symbolic capital. Teacher Yeo asserted that many practitioners consult him regularly and pay him due respect because of his in-depth knowledge of Chinese culture, religion, and cosmology. This is why he viewed his knowledge as constituting cultural capital that has elevated his stature over others who are less knowledgeable in these areas. Thus, such perceptions reflect how these practitioners prize their expertise as competencies that not only differentiate them from other contemporaries, but also legitimize their position in the fengshui field. Due to these considerations, these practitioners are therefore less willing to secularize their practices in an extensive manner.

6. The Secular Singaporean State

Besides attempting to shape the economic behaviours of Singaporeans, the state also tries to intervene in citizens' private practices, including that of religion. Singapore has embraced the ideology of a secular state by formulating its ideology, individual laws and policies without regard to any religious creed. As a multi-racial and multi-religious society, the Singaporean state's endorsement of secularity is considered an adept political strategy that has enabled the government to adopt a neutral stand towards religion (Tong,

2007: 236). This secular stance not only signals the state's neutrality on religious matters, but also locates its political authority outside and above all other interests. Therefore, it cannot be accused of showing bias towards any particular religious group, nor be held hostage to the interests of any religious group as well (Sinha,1999: 77). This facilitates the state's objective of preserving religious harmony in Singaporean society.

However, the state semblance of secularism does not represent non-interference in religious issues. The passing of the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (MRHA) and promotion of the Religious Knowledge Program in schools exemplify how the Singaporean government intervenes in the religious sphere to ensure stability and harmony, and appropriate religion for governance (Tong, 2007: 237). The MRHA, while acknowledging religious harmony, also reflects the state's rationale for policing religious issues motivated by pragmatic concerns for the stability of the state (Sinha, 1999: 82-83).

Political leaders have also reminded Singaporeans not to take religious harmony for granted (see Appendix 15 pgs 181-182). One senior cabinet minister warned that although the MRHA has yet to be invoked, it does not represent a "white elephant" or "showpiece". Rather, it constitutes part of the government's "*suite of tools to maintain law and order and communal harmony*" (see Appendix 16 pgs 183-187). Even as the government maintains and upgrades its "arsenal of coercive powers" by enacting the MRHA and other legislative measures, such warnings reflect how it adheres to the

“principle of strategic self-restraint” by “calibrating its coercion to get the job done with as little force as necessary” (George, 2005: 20).

In his National Day Rally speech 2009, the Prime Minister highlighted the “risks of religious fervour” that could threaten Singapore's social harmony and cohesiveness. This emphasis was in response to the leadership struggle at the Association of Women for Action and Research (Aware), in which a group of women mostly from one religious organization attempted a covert takeover of the secular organization (see Appendix 17 pgs 188-189). He reiterated four basic rules that Singaporeans of all religions should observe in order to maintain peace and harmony in society: exercise tolerance and restraint; keep religion separate from politics; uphold a secular government; and keeping schools and offices as secular common spaces (see Appendix 14 pgs 176-180). These reminders reiterate the importance of secularism in legitimizing the Singaporean state’s authority to mediate religious affairs and maintain religious harmony in Singapore. Subsequently, the state’s secularism entails several implications for fengshui. By conforming to state secularism, fengshui does not come under the purview of religious authorities, or is subject to government regulation of religious practices. This means that practitioners offering secular fengshui services will possess more freedom in practising and defining the art.

Teacher Yeo is one of those practitioners who secularize fengshui in order to circumvent government regulations on religious practices. For instance, he advertises his housing construction valuation skills, rather than his fengshui

services, as his primary expertise. According to him, this is to avoid being stereotyped as a charlatan by 'government officials' so that the authorities would have less grounds to 'find fault' with him. Such precautions arose after he noticed a crime prevention poster previously being exhibited at several public bus stops[24]. The poster depicted a young Chinese man sitting with an elderly lady at a stone table commonly located in the void decks of HDB (Housing Development Board) flats' The young man was holding an opened Chinese almanac in one hand, while his other hand was superimposed as positioned underneath the table. The elderly lady was holding much valuables and money, which seemed to be in danger of dropping into his hand beneath the table.

Worried that this poster could reflect how the authorities perceived most fengshui service-providers, he subsequently carried out the above-mentioned "impression management" efforts to dissociate himself from practitioners who provided dubious fengshui services and addressed themselves as "*fengshui dashi* 风水大师" (fengshui great master). His disdain for these practitioners is evidenced by how he instructed me not to address him using this 'title', which he characterized as "*jianghu wei hen zhong* 江湖味很重", meaning that it is "heavily filled with the stench of quackery".

[24] Based on Teacher Yeo's descriptions, I emailed the National Crime Prevention Council secretariat, in the Public Affairs Department of the Singapore Police Force, to request for the poster. However, the person-in-charge replied that they were unable to provide me with the poster because they had already phased it out of use.

In examining instrumental rationalization and secularization, we understand how and why practitioners participate in these processes. Most practitioners adopt the former process in order to reap the benefits of legitimizing fengshui as science and correlating it with results. However, they differ in their representations of fengshui secularity, which are motivated by practical considerations that include catering to their existing clientele and circumventing state regulations on religious practices. Subsequently, the extent of their participation in these processes accounts for their success in attracting educated middle-class Singaporean clients. In demonstrating how fengshui has adapted to the ideological values of pragmatism and secularism, these modifications help to explain why fengshui appeals to the worldviews of educated middle-class Singaporeans. In the next chapter, intellectualization and individualization will further elaborate on how fengshui has been modified to appeal to the worldviews of educated middle-class Singaporeans.

CHAPTER 4:

THE INTELLECTUALIZATION AND INDIVIDUALIZATION OF FENGSHUI

1. Introduction

The intellectualization and individualization of fengshui represent the other two key fengshui-scientization processes. Chapter three elaborated on how practitioners engaged in instrumental rationalization and secularization to alter the logic and appearance of fengshui. In corresponding with the ideological values of pragmatism and state secularism, these modifications have enabled fengshui to appeal to middle-class Singaporeans. Therefore, practitioners who have aligned their practices more closely with these two processes attract more middle-class Singaporean clients than their counterparts who participated selectively in these processes.

Similarly, intellectualization and individualization are indispensable to the modification of fengshui. Intellectualization differs from instrumental rationalization and secularization in its central role in altering the *epistemological foundation* and the *mode of accessing* the art. Individualization, on the other hand, operates on the *ethos* of fengshui by promoting the practice of self-regulation as a necessary means towards acquiring fengshui competency. These processes help to provide access for educated middle-class Singaporeans who, prior to fengshui-scientization, were unable to employ fengshui due to ideological and practical constraints.

Chapter three has examined how instrumental rationalization and secularization have removed some of these constraints. This chapter will demonstrate how intellectualization and individualization have enabled clients to overcome similar difficulties.

Intellectualization involves four components, namely, textualization, fundamentalization, translation, and systematization. Practitioners textualize and fundamentalize fengshui through three basic procedures: producing and promulgating fengshui texts, emphasizing fundamental fengshui precepts, and propagating a series of standard fengshui canons. These procedures help to raise awareness of the art, assert its validity as a textually-verifiable practice, and establish 'orthodoxy' (Bourdieu, 1977: 159-169) within the 'fengshui field'. Textualization has profound implications for the epistemological foundation of fengshui. Instead of appealing to validating experiences to prove the truth-value of fengshui, the status of texts is elevated over that of experiences as the very foundation of fengshui knowledge. The move from experiences to texts also makes it easier for practitioners to replace Chinese with English as the main conduit of fengshui knowledge, and to systematize the disparate components of fengshui practices. Unlike experiences, texts allow practitioners to identify the core and auxiliary fengshui concepts, and to explicate the manners in which they relate to one another. This radically transforms how clients access all aspects of fengshui knowledge. Instead of relying on service-providers or hearsay, clients can now authenticate fengshui techniques by simply evaluating how systematic fengshui techniques are, through referring to the various standardized canons found in textual sources.

By altering the ways in which clients access fengshui and by improving the internal consistency of the art, practitioners are able to better reach out to the average middle-class Singaporean client.

Individualization reflects how practitioners motivate clients to assume personal responsibility in learning and practising the art. This is achieved through postulating the necessary interdependence between fengshui competency and personal responsibility. Several techniques are used in cultivating the belief in this interdependence. These include imitating the university academic modular system, providing online learning services, establishing fengshui academies that propagate an academic learning style, encouraging e-learning behaviours, and participation in learning communities. The result of all these, from my observations, is the creation of a new fengshui ethos that embraces personal responsibility as the means towards competency. Clients who have bought into this ethos are the ones who are most likely to incorporate fengshui into all aspects of their lives, and henceforth adopt a habitus that is characterized by the practice of self-regulation.

Like the other fengshui-scientization processes, intellectualization and individualization have modified fengshui to appeal to the worldviews of middle-class Singaporeans. Bourdieu calls the dominant worldview of any given society the ‘doxa’ (Bourdieu, 1977: 159-169; 2001), taken-for-granted fundamental presuppositions of reality. The doxa informs the habitus, a series of durable and transposable dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977, 1989), and is in turn sustained by the habitus. Although Bourdieu set out to critique dualistic

distinctions in the study of culture (Bourdieu, 1989), one could understand doxa as the more 'theoretical' while the habitus as the more 'practical' dimensions of culture. Despite such nuanced differences, both the doxa and the habitus are similarly oriented towards the 'field', a series of social and political relations (Bourdieu, 1977). In a nutshell, the doxa, habitus, and the field operate to reinforce` one another, and in consequence, sustain the status quo. These three concepts help us to better understand the relationship between fengshui-scientization and the nature of Singaporean society.

2. Intellectualizing Religion and Fengshui in Singapore

In examining Tong's analysis of religion in Singapore (2007), I detected parallels in both the intellectualization of religion and fengshui. These similarities are helpful in elucidating how the intellectualization of fengshui has developed in Singapore and why it appeals to middle-class Singaporeans. In examining religious shifts in Singapore, Tong identified several processes that accounted for religious revival in Singapore. One process, which he calls "the intellectualization of religion", reflected several characteristics that are also evident in the intellectualization of fengshui. He defined the intellectualization of religion as a process where individuals change from an "unthinking and passive acceptance of religion" to a propensity to search for a "systematic, logical and relevant" religion (Tong, 2007: 4). He attributed this search to Singapore's English-medium scientifically-oriented educational system and Singaporeans' increased educational levels. Using Christianity as an example, Tong argued that after undergoing a rationalization process, the

perception of Christianity as a rational, modern religion partly explained why younger Singaporeans, who have been socialized into Singapore's educational system, are attracted to it. Therefore, a search for a religion with rational and textual epistemological foundations takes precedence over a respect for traditional practices (Tong, 2007: 4).

As part of the intellectualization process, the rationalization of religious beliefs and practices involves religious practitioners discarding what they perceived as religious irrationalities and instead attempting to locate some forms of religious orthodoxy. These actions include eliminating folk beliefs and practices, and organizing the disorderly elements in the religious traditions. On the other end of the rationalization process, religious converts adopted a more critical and philosophical view of religion by engaging in a questioning process, and a search for verifiable truths. Given such tendencies, religions that do not provide satisfactory rational justifications for their practices would less likely appeal to the worldviews of the younger English-educated Chinese Singaporeans (Tong, 2007: 4-5).

In addition to the rationalization of religious beliefs, Tong also analyzed the intellectualization of religion at two levels. The individual level includes the reasons for and the process of conversion, while the institutional or structural level of analysis shows how structures, religious beliefs and practices change due to religious competition (Tong, 2007: 6). Tong argued that the increasing differentiation among various Chinese religions exemplified how Chinese religion has changed from a syncretic mix of various

religious traditions to a clearer differentiation between individual religions. For instance, Buddhist and Taoist traditional beliefs are now more greatly differentiated, and practitioners possess greater clarity regarding their respective religious beliefs and rituals (Tong, 2007: 7-8). This "de-syncretization" of Chinese religion represents attempts by younger Chinese to understand the tenets of their religion, and the more philosophical and critical approach towards religion adopted by the highly-educated Chinese (Tong, 2007: 128).

As illustrated above, Singapore's educational system has predisposed Singaporeans towards seeking verifiable truths in religion. Similarly, fengshui practitioners have adapted to this predisposition by transforming fengshui into an art with verifiable origins. Secondly, the search for a textual religion over a respect for traditional practices reflects a similar development in fengshui. By emphasizing its substantive dimensions, some fengshui practitioners have portrayed fengshui as traditional practices embodying religious and cultural connotations. However, classical practitioners have criticized these practices and instead advocated fengshui-instrumentalism, which promulgates educational materials and resources as the basis of its knowledge and proof of its validity.

Just like religion, fengshui intellectualization can also be analyzed at both the individual and institutional levels. The individual level involves understanding how Singaporeans choose fengshui out of rational rather than affectual reasons. At the institutional level, fengshui practitioners have

professionalized fengshui through corporatization and institutionalization. These changes not only illustrate how they alter the appearance of fengshui, but also provide institutional support for fengshui associations' members, and legitimize the fengshui profession. Subsequently, fengshui becomes increasingly differentiated and undergoes "de-syncretization" as well. For instance, the authenticity debate between classical and new-age fengshui has resulted in a clearer distinction between the former's systematic approach and the latter's syncretic style.

Inasmuch as religion and fengshui in Singapore exhibit similar trends in their developments, they differ from each other in one fundamental aspect. According to Tong, the intellectualization of religion has contributed to increased religiosity among Singaporeans (Tong, 2007: 4). On the contrary, the intellectualization of fengshui discourages the art's association with clients' religiosity by replacing fengshui experiences and religious artifacts with texts as the basis of fengshui knowledge. Subsequently, fengshui practitioners encourage Singaporeans to adopt scientized fengshui that operates on an instrumental-rational approach and encompasses amoral and a-religious practices.

3. Intellectualization

Intellectualization involves how practitioners undertake textualization, fundamentalization, translation, and systematization to modify the epistemological foundation and the mode of accessing fengshui. First, they

carry out textualization and fundamentalization by producing and propagating fengshui texts, stressing fundamental fengshui principles, and advocating standard fengshui canons. In doing so, they modify the epistemological foundation of fengshui by substituting fengshui experiences with texts and scriptures that not only reinforce the verifiability of fengshui knowledge, but also increase the art's visibility. Such modifications also enable them to undertake translation and systematization, and help middle-class Singaporeans consume fengshui more easily. In fundamentalizing fengshui, practitioners emphasize core fengshui principles and advocate standard fengshui canons as 'authentic' fengshui. In these manners, they strive to acquire legitimacy by prioritizing textual knowledge as the basis of fengshui practice and establishing 'orthodoxy' within the fengshui field.

Following that, practitioners undertake translation and systematization in order to prioritize textual learning as the mode of accessing fengshui. Besides availing fengshui knowledge in the English language, translation also reveals how practitioners circumvent linguistic limitations in translating fengshui texts, and introduce English fengshui terminologies to distinguish their fengshui approaches. Practitioners effect systematization by developing inter-connections between core and auxiliary fengshui concepts, and creating generic learning categories and themes to organize fengshui knowledge, and methodicize fengshui learning. With these modifications, practitioners substitute economic capital with cultural capital as the main criterion for accessing fengshui, and therefore help clients overcome cultural and practical difficulties of consuming fengshui.

3.1 Textualization

Textualization illustrates how practitioners modify the epistemological foundation of fengshui by elevating fengshui texts over fengshui experiences as the basis of fengshui knowledge. Subsequently, they prioritize knowledge production as the primary means of disseminating the art and encourage clients to access and verify textual fengshui knowledge, rather than wholly relying on fengshui service-providers or purchasing fengshui artifacts.

Some new-age and classical practitioners have actively carried out textualization by publishing many contemporary fengshui texts. Although she has been labeled by classical practitioners as a new-age practitioner, nonetheless Lillian Too is regarded as the world's most popular fengshui writer who has published more than eighty book titles and sold millions of fengshui books worldwide (see Lillian Too website listed in bibliography). Her chief critic, Joey Yap, has also popularized classical fengshui by publishing many contemporary classical fengshui texts, magazines articles, and online materials. By creating and utilizing textual materials as a primary mode of propagating fengshui, these practitioners increase the visibility of fengshui, propagate their respective fengshui styles, and consolidate their positions as dominant players in the fengshui field.

3.1.1 The Significance of Textualization in Singapore

Local practitioners, too, have published fengshui books and writings, and employed them as a primary mode of instruction and knowledge transmission. In addition to teaching fengshui in Singapore Polytechnic, Grand Master Vincent Koh has published four English-medium fengshui books that includes a practitioners' guidebook titled the "Basic Science of Fengshui" (Koh, 1998, 2001a, b, 2003). These publications verify his claim of sharing fengshui knowledge through his books and courses (SFSC). Some of his students also affirmed that Master Koh would include his books in the course curriculum, which reiterates how textual materials comprise a key component in his course.

Likewise, Teacher Ow publishes English-medium annual forecast books, contributes articles to English investment and business magazines, and also authors her own English course textbooks. When I asked her why she expends so much effort writing and publishing these materials, she replied that "it is part and parcel of catering to the crowd that has made writing on fengshui the 'in-thing' nowadays". Due to the increasing educational levels of Singaporeans, she observed that 'educated' Singaporeans were becoming more discerning and adopted a 'see for themselves' attitude, rather than simply believing what the practitioner says. Such behaviours prompted her to display her books prominently at her preview talks for participants to browse. While browsing her books, one participant quipped that these texts represented 'documented proof' of Teacher Ow's credibility as a competent practitioner

and teacher. He acknowledged that most clients, including himself, would accord more credibility to practitioners who have published fengshui-related materials than those who have not done so. Such perceptions affirmed Teacher Ow's assessment of middle-class Singaporeans as favouring practitioners who have published fengshui textual materials.

Although more practitioners are textualizing fengshui, some practitioners however viewed such efforts with skepticism. During one lesson break, I asked Teacher Yeo why some practitioners were such prolific authors. He laughed skeptically and questioned whether they authored the books themselves. He pointed out that "if they are so busy providing fengshui services and giving fengshui talks around the world, how will they have the time to write all these books?" He disclosed that these authors could have adopted the fengshui 'industry' practice of "*qing qiangshou* 请抢手" (hire hitmen), meaning that some fengshui authors would employ 'hitmen' whose job was to 'churn out' books quickly for the former. The image he is trying to convey is that of Prohibition-era gangsters who shot tommy sub-machine guns and sprayed bullets everywhere. In a similar fashion, Teacher Yeo saw these 'hitmen' as being paid to produce books in great quantity, but with little regard for 'accuracy', under the guise of the author who hired them.

3.2 Fundamentalization

Fundamentalization propagates the belief in a set of fengshui fundamentals as the core of fengshui knowledge. In opposing what they

perceived as doctrinal compromises by new-age practitioners, classical practitioners advocate strict adherence to fengshui fundamentals that they claimed to be the *sine qua non* of authentic fengshui. By reiterating these fundamentals, they create a standard fengshui canon in order to establish 'orthodoxy' in the fengshui field and legitimize their approach. In doing so, they elevate textual knowledge over commodity possession as the foundational basis of fengshui practices.

To counter the syncretism of new-age practices, classical practitioners emphasize certain fundamentals underpinning authentic fengshui. For example, they defined classical fengshui as a "science" that works as a "natural consequence of consistently applying basic 'fundamentals' of the *Yijing*, the principles of balance, equilibrium (Yin/Yang), Qi, Trigrams and the Five Elements" (Yap, 2005b: 51). They asserted that that if these fundamental principles are correctly applied in residential and office spaces, it could improve the client's chances of success. On the contrary, failure in achieving fengshui efficacy is attributed to judgmental errors that arise from misguidance and wrong interpretations of these fundamentals (Yap, 2005b: 51). Such assertions depict fengshui as a scientific body of knowledge grounded in core principles that will yield positive results when learned, understood, and applied correctly. In addition, these core principles constitute the only fundamentals of authentic fengshui because "'new' fundamentals are not created overnight" (Yap, 2005b: 54). Therefore, clients should adhere strictly to these fundamentals rather than experiment with other fengshui styles. In encouraging such behaviours, classical practitioners strive to establish

classical fengshui as the orthodox approach in the fengshui field.

In debunking cultural myths, classical practitioners demonstrated how they elevate textual knowledge over commodity acquisition as the basis of fengshui practices. For instance, one popular fengshui practice involves hanging the "*bagua*八卦" (Eight Trigrams[25]) mirror above one's door to expel evil influences. Many fengshui clients have adopted this practice as a common fengshui remedy for warding off negative influences and rectifying problems. Yap claimed that *bagua* mirrors in the old days were made of brass and were used by practitioners to 'introduce' some metal influences into particular house sectors. Despite this function, the *bagua* mirror does not constitute a fengshui tool because the *bagua* is simply a diagram indicating a mathematical model of the universe. Although it may be used for spiritual purposes[26], the *bagua* mirror does not possess any special powers by itself, or carry any significance in fengshui. Instead, the *bagua* diagram itself is used for calculations and deriving fengshui formulas (Yap, 2006c: 244). Such clarifications demonstrate how classical practitioners invalidate the significance of religious and cultural artifacts for fengshui practices by emphasizing the relevance of fengshui knowledge.

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[25] The Eight Trigrams represent eight interrelated permutations in the *Yijing* that originate from the "*Sixiang* 四象" (four symbols) and give rise to the "*Liushisi gua* 六十四卦" (sixty-four hexagrams) (Ho, 1985: 34-45). These eight trigrams can be found in both the Early Heaven and Later Heaven Bagua models that are used in tandem for the application of fengshui. See Yap (2007c).

[26] Teacher Yeo explained how the concave and convex bagua mirrors are to be used. A concave bagua mirror helps to 'contain' spiritual and negative influences, while a convex bagua mirror simply 'repels' all negative influences outwards. This is why he would advise his clients not to employ the convex bagua mirror unnecessarily so as to avoid repelling the negative influences towards their neighbours and cause them harm. However, he elaborated that the 'efficacy' of these mirrors also depended on whether they have undergone the 'kaiguang' (opening the light) ritual.

3.2.1 Encouraging Fundamentalization in Singapore

Some local practitioners have strongly emphasized the importance of fundamentalization in fengshui. Teacher Yeo claimed that the *Yijing* principles constitute the philosophical foundation of Chinese metaphysics and can therefore be applied in all Chinese cosmological techniques. This applicability, he added, explains why practitioners possessing *Yijing* knowledge could master other cosmological techniques more easily than others. In spite of its importance, he lamented that many practitioners know little or nothing of this fundamental philosophy.

On his own, Teacher Yeo participates actively in *Yijing* related activities: being a member of a *Yijing* Association in China, he has attended and presented at its annual *Yijing* conferences. He also organizes regular *Yijing* classes and invites a *Yijing* specialist from mainland China to conduct them in Singapore. Although he benefits financially from organizing such classes, nonetheless he firmly believes that such classes are organized to benefit practitioners as well. He asserted confidently that practitioners who have learned the *Yijing* would acquire many fundamental ideas and greatly improve their cosmological knowledge. By working on their "*jiben gong* 基本功" (basic skills), such as the *Yijing* and other fundamental concepts, practitioners would learn more quickly and achieve the outcome of "*shi ban gong bei* 事半功倍" (getting twice the result with half the effort expended).

3.3 Translation

Given the role of the English language in Singapore's industrialization drive, the translation of fengshui into English-medium texts represents an important development. After its independence in 1965, the Singaporean state emphasized the English language "on the basis of its utility for science, technology and commerce" that makes it essential for economic development (Chua, 1985: 35). This primacy of the English language in Singaporean society has strongly motivated practitioners to translate fengshui and increase access to the art. The significance of this process is also evidenced by how some practitioners circumvent linguistic limitations in order to translate Chinese fengshui texts, while others promote particular English terminologies to accentuate their fengshui styles and cater to clients' preferences.

3.3.1 Creating Distinctive Fengshui Styles

By translating fengshui into the English language, practitioners aim to achieve practical objectives of increasing access to fengshui and reinforcing their distinctive fengshui styles. The significance of this process is evidenced by how practitioners who lack linguistic proficiency have resorted to employing others to translate fengshui texts on their behalf. During her 2008 fengshui seminar, Lillian Too informed the audience that she did not know how to read Chinese characters. In spite of her linguistic limitations, however she could still publish many English-medium fengshui books. This is because her husband, whom she claimed to be a Chinese scholar, had helped her to

interpret and translate the Chinese fengshui texts. Such revelations not only account for how fengshui authors could translate and publish fengshui books regardless of their linguistic abilities, but also underscore the importance of fengshui translation that motivates practitioners to carry out this process at all costs and against all odds.

In the process of translating fengshui, some practitioners have created their distinctive styles using particular English terminologies. Using her plethora of English-medium publications, Lillian Too has developed her trademark fengshui style that classical practitioners have criticized as new-age fengshui. Besides promoting “inner fengshui” and “de-cluttering” concepts to manage one’s inner self (Too, 2000, 2003b), she also employs religious and cultural practices, such as chanting mantras and using symbols as fengshui cures (Too, 2003a, c, 2007b), and even portrays the art as ‘magic’ (Too, 2001a, b). By incorporating diverse components in fengshui, she has enabled clients to identify with and consume the art through familiar terminologies and practices.

In a similar manner, some practitioners have successfully facilitated clients’ understanding of the art by using new-age terms. At the IFSC 2008, I asked a British practitioner whether her clients in western countries perceived fengshui as new-age practice. She affirmed this perception and attributed it to how western practitioners like herself would employ new-age terms to advise clients with little or no fengshui background. For example, in one fengshui audit, she identified that the annual Five Yellow star, a malevolent star

symbolizing sickness and misfortune (Yap, 2007c: 179), was ‘residing’ in the sector where her client had placed her television set. She interpreted that the television set, which represented the fire phase, would ‘nourish’ the Five Yellow star, as it ‘belonged’ to the earth phase. Her interpretation was based on the “*wuxing* 五行” (five phases) theory, of which its “*xiangsheng* 相生” (mutual production) principle stipulated that fire produces earth (Ho, 1985: 19). Using this production principle, she diagnosed that her client and her family members could experience sickness and encounter misfortunes if they did not undertake remedial actions to resolve the current situation. To circumvent her client’s limited fengshui understanding, she then employed new-age terms such as “inner spirituality”, “spiritual healing” and “psychic self-improvement” (Heelas, 1996) to ‘translate’ her diagnosis and ‘prescribe’ remedies for her client. In spite of criticisms against these terms, she concluded that Western practitioners would continue to use them as long as these terms remained useful for helping clients to understand fengshui.

Classical practitioners have produced direct translation works of classical fengshui texts to affirm the verifiability of classical fengshui. For example, the fengshui classic “*Dili Bianzheng* 地理辨证” that was written in the mid-1600s has been translated into the English version titled “Earth Study Discern Truth Volume One”. The classic’s main author, “*Jiang Da Hong* 蒋大鸿”, was not only regarded as a Grandmaster of the *Xuan Kong* fengshui system, but has also authored many writings that include “*Shui Long Jing* 水龙经” (Water Dragon Classic) (Zeng, 2006: 2). By producing these translation texts, classical practitioners rely on the writings and reputation of renowned

fengshui masters to legitimize their authenticity claim. These texts also represent reference materials “for those who, despite unable to read Chinese, have achieved an intermediate level of understanding of Feng Shui” (Zeng, 2006: 1). Therefore, middle-class Singaporeans can continue learning advanced fengshui knowledge by using these English-medium texts to overcome linguistic limitations in the Chinese language.

Classical practitioners also advocate a scientific approach that departs from the syncretic style of new-age fengshui. This is evidenced by how they describe fengshui as an “objective driven science”, “goal-orientated science”, “science of observation” (Yap, 2006c: 5, 112), as well as a “practical science” (Yap, 2006d: 45) and “metaphysical science” (Yap, 2005b: 9). In associating fengshui with scientific attributes, they emphasize the knowability of fengshui that makes it possible for anyone to learn it: “In Feng Shui, everything has a reason, a justification” (Yap, 2006d: 3). Such scientific aspects reinforce the instrumental value of fengshui in enabling clients to calculate ‘fortune’ easily and achieve desired results in their lives. Also, classical practitioners promote classical fengshui as a consistent approach based on fundamental and uniform principles that allow clients to adopt a standard mode of learning and practising fengshui.

3.4 Systematization

Systematization involves how practitioners develop inter-connections between core and auxiliary fengshui concepts, and categorize Chinese

cosmology into generic categories and themes. Similarly, local practitioners achieve systematization by identifying and reiterating commonalities among fengshui techniques. Subsequently, they not only improve the consistency of fengshui, but also organize fengshui knowledge, and methodicize fengshui learning in order to facilitate clients' learning processes.

3.4.1 Categorizing Fengshui Systems and Sub-Systems

Even though classical and new-age practitioners have intellectualized fengshui, the former have portrayed classical fengshui as a more systematic approach than the latter's style. To begin with, classical practitioners identify the *Sanhe* and *Sanyuan* systems as the two grand fengshui systems that encompass sub-systems such as the *Xuan Kong* Flying Stars, Eight Mansions and *Qimen Dunjia* techniques (Yap, 2005b: 11-14). These respective fengshui systems and sub-systems are then categorized according to generic qualities such as time aspects or environmental features. These qualities not only reflect commonalities linking some systems together but also highlight differences among other systems. Although fengshui enthusiasts may consider these different fengshui schools as possessing 'conflicting' theories, classical practitioners assert that these different schools are simply operating at "different levels" because classical fengshui is practised as "one school" (Yap, 2005b: 14).

3.4.2 Developing Generic Learning Themes and Categories

Besides reinforcing inter-connections between core and auxiliary concepts, classical practitioners have also created generic learning themes and categories. In the Mastery Academy of Chinese Metaphysics, Chinese cosmology is categorized into the *Bazi*, *Yijing* and fengshui 'Mastery Series', and grouped under 'Schools' of fengshui, Chinese astrology, physiognomy, and divination. These groupings represent "varied, cross-disciplinary modes of knowledge" that integrate generic fundamentals across different techniques (MasteryAcademy). For instance, the School of Chinese astrology consists of *Bazi* and date selection, which both function as specialized and independent techniques. However, they can be employed interchangeably, as practitioners do incorporate *Baz*i into date selection processes as well (see footnote 20). Apart from creating "courses and programs with a clear design and format", the academy also ensures that "knowledge is imparted within systematic frameworks to facilitate a student's learning process" (MasteryAcademy). Therefore, classical fengshui is portrayed as a highly organized approach that enables clients to learn Chinese cosmology in a methodical manner.

New-age fengshui, however, assumes a less systematic character. This is partly due to its juxtaposition of disparate components that do not clearly distinguish between core and auxiliary concepts, or exemplify well-defined inter-connections. In contrast to the "step-by-step" classical approach of learning and applying fundamental principles, new-age practitioners prefer to provide "personal tips" for fengshui enthusiasts. For instance, "fengshui tips"

sections in websites (LillianToo) and book titles such as “168 ways to success”, “48 sure ways to create magic in your living space”, and “168 feng shui ways to energize your life” (Too, 2001b, 2003b, 2007a) all depict fengshui as piecemeal information rather than an integrated system of knowledge and practice.

At the IFSC 2008, I asked one practitioner for her views on new-age and classical fengshui. Using metaphors to describe her perceptions, she first characterized new-age fengshui as an aquarium tank to symbolize the former’s flexibility in encompassing many diverse influences. She claimed that new-age practitioners incorporated various influences into fengshui and promoted what she termed “flavour of the month” fengshui trends. These trends were responsible for portraying new-age fengshui as a fun and fashionable style, which led classical practitioners to stereotype it as “pop fengshui”. She then described classical fengshui as resembling a spider web. Although it requires much time and effort to weave, the web comprises intricate and yet symmetrical threads that ensure that any vibration would resonate throughout the entire web. Likewise, the systematic linkages in classical fengshui resembled these threads in maintaining resonance between fengshui concept and practice. For her, this feature clearly justified why classical fengshui represented a more consistent approach than new-age fengshui.

3.4.3 Systematizing Fengshui in Singapore

In perceiving the systematization of fengshui as a positive development, some local practitioners have carried out this process by identifying common grounds among various cosmological techniques. Teacher Yeo defined the systematization of Chinese cosmology as "*ba butong de zhishi lianjie qilai* 把不同的知识连接起来 (to connect different forms of knowledge together), which he claimed as useful for expediting learning processes and encouraging practitioners to engage in continuous learning. Subsequently, they are less likely to emulate practitioners who "roam the pugilistic world" by proclaiming the omnipotence of their limited fengshui knowledge, which Teacher Yeo described derisively as "*sanjiao mao gongfu* 三脚猫功夫" (three-legged cat kungfu). This term is used to describe someone who possesses limited or superficial proficiency. Concerned that his students could end up as 'mediocre' practitioners, he would often advise all of us by saying "*bu yao gei yi zhong zhishi menpai qian zhe zou* 不要给一种知识门派牵着走" (do not allow any individual type of knowledge or school to lead one by the nose), which I easily recognized as another veiled criticism of practitioners in the "pugilistic world".

Teacher Yeo systematizes Chinese cosmology by identifying commonalities among various schools and techniques. He agreed with how classical practitioners have rightly emphasized basic fundamentals in Chinese cosmology, which according to him, constitutes an integrated system with various schools of thought that are inter-related by standard variables. This

explains why he could utilize the annual flying stars and *Qimen Dunjia* techniques at the same time by recognizing and comprehending how similar auspicious components inhere in and function for both techniques. Similarly, practitioners who understood such inter-connections could then cross-reference their interpretations with different techniques and thus achieve a higher level of probability in their predictions. He described this practice as "*tongji yi qiu anxin* 统计以求安心", meaning to conduct aggregation in order to achieve a state of reassurance. With more techniques at one's disposal, practitioners like him can carry out multiple calculations and improve the 'accuracy' of their interpretations. Therefore, he would emphasize these variables in his classes to help his students understand and apply various techniques more easily.

4. Correlating Educational Levels with Fengshui Attitudes

The importance of one's educational levels is reiterated by how some practitioners correlate educational levels with fengshui attitudes. In particular, Teacher Yeo likes to differentiate practitioners according to their educational levels: those who possessed 'high' educational qualifications are identified as "*you xuewen* 有学问" (possessing knowledge), while others with 'poor' educational qualifications are labeled as "*mei you xuewen* 没有学问" (lacking in knowledge). Occasionally, he would boast that both of us qualify as "*you xuewen*" practitioners with our educational qualifications. Such educational distinctions, he explained, arose from his observations that 'educated' and 'uneducated' practitioners exhibited different attitudes towards fengshui. Thus,

he viewed the former approvingly because they tend to learn fengshui as an intellectual pursuit. However, he was critical of the latter that he stereotyped as capitalizing on fengshui to make a living and achieve practical goals. In view of their contrasting attitudes, he strongly asserted that ‘educated practitioners’ were more inclined to become competent and ethical practitioners, so long as they were motivated by intellectual rather than pragmatic purposes in mastering fengshui.

By intellectualizing fengshui, practitioners have modified the art to mimic scientific and rational characteristics of Singapore’s educational system, and avail fengshui knowledge in the English language. In doing so, they have prioritized cultural capital over economic capital as the primary means of appropriating scientized fengshui. This criterion shift has enabled the ‘once-disadvantaged’ educated middle-class Singaporeans to overcome cultural and practical difficulties of appreciating fengshui. Subsequently, the compatibility between their dispositions, and the ideological and institutional frameworks in Singaporean society would incline them towards adopting self-regulative behaviours to achieve fengshui competency. To account for such behaviours, we will focus on the study of individualization in the next section.

5. Individualization

Individualization involves how practitioners incline middle-class Singaporean clients towards assuming personal responsibility in mastering

fengshui. First, practitioners emphasize the importance of personal efforts by positing a necessary interdependence between personal responsibility and fengshui competency. Next, they promote learning through practice by publishing educational materials that not only expound the art in simple terms, but also contain step-by-step instructions for fengshui tasks. In these manners, practitioners not only reassure clients of the ease in employing fengshui knowledge, but also encourage them to purchase these essential guides that are customized for their learning process.

Practitioners also introduce learning techniques to foster clients' belief in and commitment to personal responsibility for attaining fengshui competency. For instance, they adopt the university academic modular system, provide online learning services, establish fengshui academies that employ an academic learning approach, facilitate e-learning behaviours, and participation in learning communities. Using these techniques, they create a new fengshui ethos that reaffirms personal responsibility as the key to fengshui competency. Therefore, clients who subscribe to this ethos are likely to assimilate fengshui into their lifestyle and adhere to self-regulative learning behaviours. Such behaviours correspond with the ideology of self-reliance, which is manifested in "life-long learning" and "skills upgrading" state campaigns urging Singaporeans to maintain their employability and economic competitiveness. By adapting to this ideology, fengshui appeals to the worldviews of educated middle-class Singaporeans who perceive ability and education as the pre-requisites for success.

5.1 Prioritizing Personal Efforts

Classical practitioners encourage clients to participate in fengshui learning and practice by studying educational texts, accessing online resources, and conducting basic fengshui audits. Subsequently, these practitioners not only promote the use of simplified fengshui materials to facilitate fengshui learning, but also allay clients' fears of learning and practising the art. These efforts represent how classical practitioners prioritize personal efforts as a necessary requirement for achieving fengshui competency. Similarly, local practitioners downplay the relevance of Chinese cosmological factors and instead elevate human agency as the most important factor in determining one's potential in life.

5.1.1 Encouraging Fengshui Learning and Practice

Classical practitioners have actively encouraged clients to learn and practise fengshui with classical fengshui texts, and reassure them of the ease in learning fengshui. These texts include "preparatory activities" that include step-by-step instructions to help clients gain 'hands-on' practice and achieve specific objectives. For instance, some activities involve completing basic fengshui tasks for a fengshui audit on existing properties (Yap, 2008b), while others help clients to "self-assess prospective properties"(Yap, 2006c, d). To elicit clients' participation, practitioners not only provide easy and systematic instructions for these fengshui tasks, but also affirm the simplicity of specific fengshui techniques. Yap claimed that his *Xuan Kong* Flying Stars book is not

only suitable for clients who want to learn a simple method of applying classical fengshui, but is “also an ideal stepping stone into the world of Classical Feng Shui and beginning your journey into the fascinating field of Chinese Metaphysics”(Yap, 2007c: 6). He then described the *Xuan Kong* Flying Stars technique as “one of the easiest and most basic fengshui systems to learn” (Yap, 2007c: 6). Therefore, “[u]nderstanding how to apply Flying Stars is like learning how to use the lights in your house”, while “[u]nderstanding how to activate or deactivate the stars is therefore understanding how to turn on the lights or flip the switch to turn on the lights” (Yap, 2007c: 190). These claims not only incline clients to adopt fengshui learning, but also prove how practitioners promote this ‘hands-on’ approach as an essential aspect for mastering the art.

5.1.2 Importance of Personal Efforts in Achieving Success

As part of individualizing fengshui, practitioners have contextualized the importance of personal efforts with the “cosmic trinity” concept in Chinese cosmology. In referring to how the universe can be ordered and defined by the principle of “Heaven-Earth-Man”, this concept is typically applied to account for a person’s success in life. In Chinese metaphysics, a person's potential in life can be determined by looking at their “Heaven Luck” (*Bazi* or astrology), their “Earth Luck” (fengshui) and their “Man Luck” (personal efforts)(Yap, 2007c: 37). Based on this concept, the individualized approach corresponds to the “Man Luck” component of personal efforts that represents one-third of the “cosmic trinity” responsible for one’s life potential.

In my fieldwork, I observed that local practitioners have minimized the importance of Chinese cosmological factors and raised the priority of personal efforts in justifying one's potential in life The common Chinese saying, "*yi ming, er yun, san fengshui, si jide, wu dushu* 一命，二运，三风水，四积德，五读书" (first destiny, second luck, third fengshui, fourth accumulation of merit, fifth education), prioritized destiny as the most important factor determining one's potential in life, followed by luck, fengshui, accumulation of merit and finally education (Lip, 2008: 16). However, Teacher Yeo's version reversed the order as "*yi dushu, er jide, san fengshui, si yun, wu ming* 一读书，二积德，三风水，四运，五命" (first education, second accumulation of merit, third fengshui, fourth luck, fifth destiny). This revised interpretation, which he defined as "*xiandai lilun* 现代理论" (modern theory), prioritized education as the most important factor and relegated destiny to be the least important. In doing so, Teacher Yeo has elevated "Man Luck" over both "Heaven Luck" and "Earth Luck" as the most important "cosmic trinity" component.

Teacher Yeo stressed that Chinese cosmology and fengshui, as bodies of knowledge, should be studied in relation to its social context, or what he described as "*shehui fengqi* 社会风气" (ethos). He prioritized education as the most important factor because he perceived that educational qualifications would primarily determine how most Singaporeans would fare in Singaporean society. Thus, he regarded Singapore as a "*wenping shehui* 文凭社会" (paper-chase society) where people possessing the necessary educational qualifications would stand a better chance of achieving a comfortable lifestyle.

For those who do not possess the required qualifications, they would have to resort to unconventional means in order to "*churen toudi* 出人头地" (stand out from the rest).

Following that, he explained why he ranked accumulation of merit as the second most important factor. Besides its conventional meaning of performing good deeds, he also defined the accumulation of merit as the proper management of inter-personal relationships. Based on his life experiences, he concluded that people who accorded respect to and exhibited empathy towards others tend to secure goodwill that could stand them in good stead. Therefore, he advised that practitioners should first "achieve proficiency" in the first two components before relying on fengshui. The latter's efficacy would in turn require individualized and continuous learning, which he described as "多学多管用 *duo xue duo guanyong*" (the more you learn, the more effective you become). By participating actively in continuous learning, practitioners could complement fengshui with other cosmological techniques and also cultivate a more informed attitude towards the art. So long as more practitioners pursue learning in this manner, he believed that the credibility of fengshui would improve over time.

5.2 Learning Techniques for Individualized Learning

Classical practitioners have employed several techniques to motivate clients towards individualized learning. They include replacing the master-disciple tutelage relationship with the academic modular system,

providing online courses and resources, establishing fengshui academies to institutionalize academic learning, encouraging e-learning behaviours and participation in learning communities. As stated in chapter two, I examined these techniques in individualization primarily because they help to modify the modes of learning and accessing the art. These techniques also operationalize the fengshui ethos of advancing personal responsibility as the means for attaining fengshui competency. In subscribing to this ethos, middle-class Singaporeans would participate in continuous learning and adopt self-reliant behaviours, which not only sustain the 'self-reliance' dimension of their habitus, but also underscore their belief in education and personal efforts as key attributes of success.

5.2.1 The Academic Modular System

Practitioners modify the mode of learning and accessing fengshui by imitating the university academic modular system. From historical times, fengshui enthusiasts would seek tutelage from a practising fengshui master (De Groot, 1910: 1011). However, practitioners have replaced the tutelage custom with the academic modular system in order to "mimic the concept and structure of a modern university" (MasteryAcademy). Besides providing a range of Chinese cosmology courses, this system caters to clients' preferences and allows them to determine their learning pace. Clients who possess a tertiary education would also find this system a familiar feature. Given that modular courses appear to possess a more systematic and reliable curriculum than those taught on an ad-hoc basis, I have observed that more local

practitioners are adopting this system to offer more courses, recruit more students, and increase their business revenue.

Teacher Ow exemplifies local practitioners who have adopted the modular system. In her preview talks, she criticized the tutelage arrangement as a highly unproductive practice, given that the disciple could “waste twenty-five years before he or she learns everything from the master”. Instead, her modular teaching style “cuts away these twenty-five years of crap and bullshit” by condensing essential fengshui knowledge into six hours of lessons that are taught in three night classes. In other preview talks, practitioners would also advertise such condensed learning as a key attraction of their courses. Teacher Ow claimed that her students could learn Chinese cosmology in a shorter time because the modular system provides structural support for academic learning, and she has also customized her courses into simple, straightforward, and systematic lessons. She also assured potential students that this system allows them to register for online lessons and make-up classes according to their preferences. She attributed such learning flexibility to the “instant noodle era” that has cultivated a “quick fix syndrome” among Singaporeans. Therefore, practitioners like herself, have improvised their teaching styles to adapt to such circumstances by accommodating clients’ preferences.

5.2.2 Introducing Online Fengshui Learning Services

The introduction of online fengshui learning services represents another modification to the mode of accessing fengshui. In corporatizing fengshui, practitioners have created personal websites for disseminating cosmological information and providing online 'calculators' for users to generate astrological charts. Some practitioners, however, deliver a variety of customized online learning services through several websites. These services not only facilitate easy access to individualized learning, but also allow clients to manage their learning processes. By mirroring online learning trends in academic and professional domains, these online learning services cater to the preferences of middle-class Singaporeans and motivate them to pursue learning in a proactive manner.

Classical practitioners have leveraged on online learning trends by introducing fengshui e-learning services and products in several websites. Besides his personalized website, Yap has also created other websites for e-learning purposes. For example, the Mastery Academy's E-Learning Centre was established as a "virtual gateway to Chinese metaphysics" that consists of three distinct components: online courses, "MA Live!" and "Video-on-Demand". Online courses comprise several levels of lessons: each lesson includes a pre-recorded video session on the particular topic, presentation slides, graphics, and tutorial notes that clients can download for future reference. The second component, "MA Live!", represents a virtual version of a live class, which incorporates live broadcasts of practitioners'

courses and seminars. During these sessions, students not only watch and listen to the practitioners talking ‘live’, but can also participate and talk to them via the “MA Live!” interface.

The Video-On-Demand (VOD) component constitutes a series of pre-logged online videos that documents practitioners sharing their experiences of Chinese metaphysical subjects. Another online service, called Webinars, includes Web-driven seminars, presentations or workshops that are available through internet access (MAE-LearningCentre). In addition, the “my Virtual classroom” function helps clients to manage their own programs, levels, and lessons, and allows them to directly access the specific lesson they wish to learn by bypassing various web pages. In this manner, they would circumvent any possible difficulties in accessing the various online services and features.

Such fengshui e-learning services parallel the increasing use of online-based learning in both academic and professional domains. Local academic institutions such as Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and National University of Singapore (NUS) have incorporated an E-learning week for students to learn from home by accessing pre-recorded lectures online (NTU, ; NUS), while some private educational institutions employ e-learning functions in their academic curriculum (MDIS). In the professional realm, some government ministries have incorporated e-learning to motivate staff towards personalized learning (NHG), while other statutory boards rely on it to build up “information seeking competencies of Singaporeans” (NLB). In tandem with the increasing adoption of e-learning in these domains,

classical practitioners have introduced this trend in their fengshui services to incline middle-class Singaporeans towards individualized learning.

5.2.3 Providing Online Resources and Learning Platforms

As illustrated in chapter two, fengshui academies alter the mode of accessing fengshui by institutionalizing an academic approach towards Chinese metaphysics. Besides promoting modular learning, these academies also provide online resources for members and support learning platforms such as student communities. For instance, its members can access online resource tools, register with popular networking sites, and participate in online discussion forums. By creating institutional support for learning communities, practitioners aim to popularize knowledge sharing practices and encourage clients to learn from one another. Such knowledge sharing practices mirror Singapore's knowledge-based economy model that emphasizes the application of ideas directed towards "value creation" rather than the production of material goods (Mauzy and Milne, 2002: 1-2). Thus, knowledge sharing practices not only provide clients with more learning options, but also incline the latter towards individualized learning.

Fengshui academies provide institutional support by availing online resources that members can utilize for learning fengshui. The Mastery Academy of Chinese Metaphysics provides a compilation of "research and developmental materials and tools" that are archived in its articles, tutorials,

and online tools sections, and published in the Mastery Journal newsletter. The articles' and tutorial sections contain articles written and published by classical practitioners that students can use for reference and self-study. The online tools section provides "a set of devices" that simplify the process of formula-breaking and calculation in fengshui and Chinese astrology, and assist students and fengshui enthusiasts in gaining greater access to these methods. The Mastery Journal Newsletter comprises a free monthly online publication that delivers "bite-sized information" to students (MasteryAcademy). Therefore, fengshui academies play an instrumental role in supporting clients' learning journey by providing such online resources.

Fengshui academies also facilitate the growth of learning communities by offering membership through popular networking websites and providing learning platforms to foster knowledge sharing practices. For example, fengshui enthusiasts can join Mastery Academy via Facebook, which is currently a popular online social networking directory, and connect virtually with other academy members and fellow enthusiasts. Besides having membership accounts in these networking directories, the academy also hosts learning platforms, such as online discussion forums, in its website to incline members towards posting questions and sharing knowledge with others. Through various avenues of virtual membership and online participation, practitioners attempt to develop learning communities that will not only cultivate knowledge sharing practices but also generate peer support for learning. In doing so, they cater to the preferences of middle-class Singaporeans by supporting their learning process and reinforcing their

inclinations towards self-regulative behaviours.

6. Individualization and Self-Reliance in Singaporean Society

Besides retaining its colonial infrastructure, such as the English language and scientifically-oriented educational system, legal framework, and the civil service, the Singaporean state also incorporated modern western practices of capitalism and universal suffrage. However, it clearly rejected political-liberalism and state welfarism, using ideological values like "Confucianism", "Asian Values" and "Shared Values" to safeguard against what it called "decadent western individualism" (Chua and Kuo, 1995: 113). In addition to western forms of democracy, such as freedom of the press and rights to free speech, the state also opposed the idea of welfarism (Friedman, 1981: 3), which it perceived as a Western system that causes economic competitiveness and work ethic to deteriorate (Chua, 1995: 26). The state then attempted to propagate non-welfarism as "self-reliance", "self-responsibility", or "self-dependency" in order to incline Singaporeans towards depending on themselves rather than relying on the state for assistance.

Thus, the ideologies of pragmatism, meritocracy, and non-welfarism in Singaporean society reflect and cultivate the assumption of the innate virtues of self-reliance and pragmatism. This particular doxa can be found conspicuously in the various forms of conduct and decisions, i.e. habitus of middle-class Singaporeans. The reason why scientized fengshui appeals to the middle-class Singaporean is precisely due to the affinities between the

fengshui-scientization processes and doxic traits of fengshui clients. As I argued in the previous chapter, instrumental rationalization appeals to the pragmatism of Singaporeans. That, however, is only part of the picture; the 'self-reliance' dimension of the Singaporean habitus is also operated on by individualization found in fengshui-scientization. In emphasizing the interdependence between self-responsibility and fengshui competency, individualization reiterates the virtues of self-reliance that the state invokes in urging Singaporeans to participate in "continuous learning" and "value-add" to their work (see Appendix 18 pgs 190-183). In promoting an ethos of self-responsibility, practitioners have transformed the practice of fengshui as a form of lifestyle that involves self-regulatory practices. Such an ethos finds an easy alliance with the doxic attitudes and habitus of the average middle-class Singaporean, one who, according to Tan (2004: 84) attributes success to personal effort, ability, and education.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have studied the fengshui-scientization phenomenon by using the Weberian and Bourdieuian approaches to examine how and why fengshui undergoes scientization in Singapore. To answer these questions, I first conceptualized a fengshui-scientization trend comprising five main processes: professionalization, instrumental rationalization, secularization, intellectualization, and individualization. These processes not only modify the epistemological foundation, appearance, logic, and mode of accessing fengshui, but also transform the art into sets of scientific techniques that emphasize and facilitate the rational calculation of 'fortune'.

Chapter two functioned as a prelude to my analysis of fengshui-scientization by providing a socio-historical perspective of fengshui's development in Singapore. Besides introducing the general fengshui schools and approaches, I also identified local fengshui trends: the decline of Yin Dwelling Fengshui, popularization of Yang Dwelling Fengshui, fengshui consumerism, and the syncretism of fengshui. Although I intended to study the fengshui field, I was unable to do so due to my limited cultural and social capital. Nonetheless, I studied the local fengshui scene instead by profiling practitioners who featured regularly in my thesis and analyzing how local practitioners professionalized fengshui through corporatization and institutionalization. Corporatization involved how practitioners employed information technology, adopted "impression management" techniques, and improved organizational competency to legitimize themselves as qualified

service-providers offering corporate-style fengshui services. They then effected institutionalization by establishing fengshui associations and academies, and organizing conventions in order to increase professional membership, academize fengshui knowledge, improve the prestige of fengshui, and safeguard the jurisdiction of its profession. Although these changes illustrated how practitioners altered the appearance of fengshui, they did not satisfactorily explain why some practitioners are more successful in attracting middle-class Singaporean clients, or clarify the mechanisms of and reasons for the occurrence of fengshui-scientization in Singaporean society.

In chapter three, I delved into fengshui-scientization by studying instrumental rationalization and secularization. To contextualize these processes, I first examined the authenticity debate that reflected how classical and new-age practitioners contested over fengshui authenticity, and propagated the veracity of their fengshui approaches. By engaging in instrumental rationalization, classical practitioners not only replaced substantive aspects of fengshui with an instrumental logic, but also prioritized practical results to justify fengshui practices. These changes illustrated how they affirmed fengshui as a goal-oriented practice that could yield practical results for its users. Similarly, local practitioners undertook instrumental rationalization by emphasizing scientific and practical aspects of fengshui, simplifying fengshui practices, and adopting a pragmatic approach towards the art.

In secularizing fengshui, practitioners performed ‘de-spiritualization’ and ‘de-teleolization’ by debunking cultural and religious myths, removing superstitious and mysterious aspects of fengshui, and portraying the art as an a-religious and amoral practice. As a result, these measures not only dissociated fengshui with spirituality, but also disavowed its relevance for ontological and eschatological issues. Subsequently, the mode of accessing fengshui becomes modified when practitioners disproved the use of cultural and religious artifacts as fengshui remedies, and recommended instead the acquisition of fengshui knowledge for appropriating fengshui.

Significantly, instrumental rationalization and secularization reiterated how fengshui has adapted to certain ideological frameworks in Singaporean society. The emphasis of fengshui as a goal-oriented practice exemplified how fengshui has accommodated the pragmatism of middle-class Singaporeans by aligning itself with the ideology of pragmatism. In conforming to state secularism, fengshui becomes exempted from state regulations governing religious practices, which in turn allows practitioners to define and propagate the art more freely. Subsequently, those offering secular fengshui services could transcend religious boundaries and cater to clients regardless of their religious affiliations. Based on the contrasting fortunes of practitioners providing secular fengshui services and those who employ selective secularism, we can understand how and why middle-class Singaporean clients tend to favour secular fengshui practices.

In chapter four, intellectualization and individualization revealed how practitioners altered the epistemological foundation and mode of accessing fengshui. Besides replacing fengshui experiences with textual sources as the basis of fengshui knowledge, intellectualization also involved how practitioners translated fengshui knowledge into the English language, and systematized core and auxiliary fengshui concepts. In these manners, they not only elevated cultural capital over economic capital as the main criterion for accessing fengshui, but also enabled middle-class Singaporeans overcome cultural and practical difficulties of consuming fengshui. To encourage clients towards individualization, practitioners promoted fengshui learning and practice, and emphasized the importance of personal efforts in achiving fengshui mastery. For these purposes, they introduced various learning techniques: imitating the university academic modular system, introducing online fengshui learning services, establishing fengshui schools, promoting e-learning behaviours, and availing online resources and learning platforms. These techniques also operationalized a fengshui ethos that postulates a necessary interdependence between personal responsibility and fengshui competency, and transformed fengshui into a lifestyle comprising self-regulative practices.

As with instrumental rationalization and secularization, intellectualization and individualization have also demonstrated how fengshui has conformed to particular institutional and ideological components in Singaporean society. By mimicking scientific and rational aspects of Singapore’s educational system, and incorporating the English language, fengshui becomes modified as a body

of textually-based English-medium knowledge advancing an educational approach, and reinforcing the habitus of middle-class Singaporeans. In cultivating self-reliant behaviours, individualization reiterates the state's emphasis on continuous learning and upgrading efforts that strongly correspond with the doxic attitudes of middle-class Singaporeans who associate success with education and hard work.

In investigating why fengshui becomes scientized in Singapore, I concluded that the fengshui-scientization processes revealed how fengshui has adapted to and imitated particular ideological and institutional frameworks in Singaporean society. These adaptations have enabled fengshui to exhibit the 'orthodoxy' that is established by these frameworks and reflected in the Singaporean doxa of pragmatism, secularism, and self-reliance. Subsequently, this 'orthodoxy' legitimizes the authenticity of scientized fengshui that partly accounts for its popularity among Singaporeans. To a greater extent, however, this approach accommodates the worldviews of middle-class Singaporeans by maintaining resonance between the latter's habitus and the Singaporean doxa. Also, these conclusions represent a critique of Singaporean society that affirms how its ideological and institutional frameworks justify the prevalence of a scientific zeitgeist that has effected the rationalization of Chinese traditional practices.

Due to scarce academic literature on fengshui, there remain many areas of research yet to be explored. To begin with, researchers could interview Singaporeans of different social classes to study their perceptions of and

subscription to fengshui practices, which could highlight possible correlations between clients' socio-economic backgrounds and their fengshui preferences. Such findings could verify my observations of middle-class Singaporeans as favouring scientized fengshui services, while working-class Singaporeans are more inclined towards religious fengshui practices. Second, professionalization could be examined in detail by profiling key fengshui stakeholders and understanding the manners in which they carry out professionalization. Third, a meaningful albeit challenging project would be a visual ethnographic study of grave geomancy in Singapore. This study could yield invaluable insights into the dimensions and appeal of grave geomancy, which could possibly lose its relevance in Singaporean society.

On a final note, in view of the causes of and reasons for fengshui-scientization in Singaporean society, researchers could follow up on my thesis by analyzing whether fengshui users experience re-enchantment or dis-enchantment effects. Specifically, new-age and classical fengshui clients should be included in a comparative study to understand whether religious and secular fengshui practices entail re-enchantment or dis-enchantment effects, and identify how and why clients perceive these approaches as an effective coping strategy in everyday life. In conclusion, I hope that this thesis has not only elucidated local fengshui practitioners and fengshui practices, but will also inspire like-minded researchers to embark on new research areas in fengshui.

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Appendix 1

Summary of the Five Fengshui-Scientization Processes

Process	Component	Type of Modification	Goal	Outcome/consequence	Institutional/ Ideological framework
Professionalization	Corporatization	Appearance	Improve legitimacy and credibility of fengshui	1. Employ information technology to popularize fengshui and facilitate fengshui services 2. Adopt impression management techniques to develop professional image 3. Improve organization competency by acquiring organizational accreditations and focusing on service quality	Pragmatism
Professionalization	Institutionalization	Appearance	1. Encourage membership 2. Academize fengshui knowledge 3. Increase prestige of fengshui 4. Safeguard jurisdiction of fengshui profession	1. Establish fengshui associations and academies 2. Organize fengshui conventions	Pragmatism

Process	Component	Type of Modification	Goal	Outcome/consequence	Institutional/ Ideological framework
Instrumental Rationalization	De-mystification	Logic	1. Increase practicality of fengshui 2. Improve calculability of fortune	1. Emphasize practical and scientific aspects of fengshui 2. Simplify fengshui practices 3. Correlate fengshui with results 4. Adopt pragmatic approach towards fengshui	Pragmatism
Secularization	De-spiritualization	1. Mode of accessing fengshui 2. Appearance	1. Transform fengshui into an a-religious practice 2. Enable clients from any religious background to employ fengshui	1. Remove religious and cultural prescriptions in fengshui 2. Circumvent state regulations on religious practices 3. Transcend religious boundaries	Secularism
Secularization	De-teleolization	1. Mode of accessing fengshui 2. Appearance	Dissociate fengshui with ontological and eschatological issues	1. Remove moral prescriptions in fengshui 2. Emphasize utility of fengshui as instrumental means for this-worldly ends	Secularism

Process	Component	Type of Modification	Goal	Outcome/consequence	Institutional/ Ideological framework
Intellectualization	Textualization	Epistemological foundation	Substitute fengshui experiences with fengshui texts as basis of fengshui knowledge	1. Raise awareness of, and accessibility, to fengshui 2. Create textual verifiability of fengshui knowledge 3. Facilitate translation and systematization	Singapore's educational system
Intellectualization	Fundamentalization	Epistemological foundation	Establish orthodoxy within fengshui field	1. Create standard fengshui canons 2. Elevate textual knowledge over commodity possession as foundational basis of fengshui practices	Singapore's educational system
Intellectualization	Translation	Mode of accessing fengshui	1. Enable middle-class Singaporeans overcome cultural and practical difficulties of employing fengshui 2. Create distinctive fengshui styles	1. Prioritize cultural capital over economic capital as main criterion of accessing fengshui 2. Employ particular English terminologies to distinguish fengshui style	English language

Process	Component	Type of Modification	Goal	Outcome/consequence	Institutional/ Ideological framework
Intellectualization	Systematization	Mode of accessing fengshui	1. Improve internal consistency of fengshui 2. Organize fengshui knowledge and methodicize fengshui learning	1. Develop inter-connections between core and auxiliary fengshui concepts 2. Create generic learning themes and categories 3. Identify commonalities in fengshui techniques	Singapore's educational system
Individualization	Prioritizing personal efforts	Mode of accessing fengshui	Incline middle-class Singaporeans towards assuming personal responsibility in mastering fengshui	1. Participate in personalized learning activities 2. Reassure clients of ease in learning simplified fengshui knowledge 3. Prioritize education/ continuous learning as essential component of achieving success in life	Self-reliance
Individualization	Promoting learning techniques	Mode of accessing fengshui	1. Create fengshui ethos correlating personal responsibility with fengshui competency. 2. Encourage self-regulative learning behaviours 3. Develop learning communities	1. Imitate academic modular system 2. Introduce online fengshui learning services 3. Establish fengshui academies 4. Encourage e-learning behaviours 5. Provide online resources and learning platforms	Self-reliance

Appendix 2

The Straits Times (Singapore)

(S.T., February 27, 2008)

Woodlands cemetery to make way for MRT depot

LENGTH: 309 words

NEARLY 2,000 graves in Woodlands will be exhumed to make way for a new MRT depot, the Land Transport Authority said yesterday.

The exhumation is scheduled to begin in October in the Kwong Hou Sua Teochew Cemetery, a little-known graveyard said to date back to the 1940s.

Part of the cemetery sits on a 21ha site earmarked for a depot, where trains for the upcoming Downtown Line will be serviced, repaired and parked.

The rail yard, to be located in Woodlands Road across from the Sungei Kadut Industrial Estate, will be twice the size of the Circle Line's Kim Chuan Depot, touted as the world's largest underground train depot. The Woodlands yard, however, will be built above ground.

Its construction will affect 1,957 graves at Kwong Hou Sua. The cemetery's remaining graves, estimated at between 2,500 and 3,000, will be dug up later to make room for a new industrial estate. A temple on the site will have to go as well.

The Singapore Land Authority said that the exact number of exhumed graves would be determined only at a later date.

Relatives can register at www.lta.gov.sg/ projects/kwonghousua/index.htm to claim the exhumed remains.

Construction on the new MRT depot will start in December this year. It is scheduled for completion in 2015, in time for the opening of the second stage of the Downtown Line.

The line is a $12 billion 33-station MRT project, which will be built in three stages. The first stage, which will serve the Marina Bay area, is expected to be up in 2013. The second, snaking up the Bukit Timah area and ending in Bukit Panjang, will be up in 2015. The final stage will head east to end at the Singapore Expo and is scheduled to be completed in 2016.

The line will intersect with other MRT lines, with interchange stations at Botanic Gardens, Newton, Little India, Bugis, Promenade, Bayfront, Chinatown and MacPherson.

CHRISTOPHER TAN

LOAD-DATE: February 26, 2008

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Appendix 3

The Straits Times (Singapore)

(S.T., March 31, 2008)

LTA widens outreach effort

LENGTH: 467 words

TRANSPORT Minister Raymond Lim yesterday launched a programme designed to involve the public in future land transport projects.

The Land Transport Authority's Community Outreach Programme will give the public more say in transport matters as well as more timely information.

At a ceremony at the LTA's Hampshire Road headquarters, Mr Lim also unveiled the Land Transport Masterplan, a 101-page report documenting the sweeping transport reforms he announced in January.

Some 48,000 condensed versions of the report titled How Do We Ensure A Liveable City? will be distributed to schools and grassroots groups and handed out at events.

'The Government cannot realise the improvements outlined in the masterplan on its own, no matter how much effort it puts into it,' Mr Lim said. 'Singaporeans must play their part to make these changes a success.

'It is therefore important for us to engage our communities and reach out to them as stakeholders.'

In the coming months, the LTA will hold a total of 14 meetings with grassroots leaders and advisers from the 84 constituencies here.

It is also lining up at least 10 public visits to project sites such as Circle Line MRT stations.

'Site visits are an especially important part of our community outreach,' Mr Lim said. 'Nothing demonstrates what is happening better.'

The Land Transport Masterplan includes:

Making bus travel faster by giving buses priority on the road and letting the LTA plan routes instead of giving transport companies this task;

Increasing Electronic Road Pricing coverage and reducing the Certificate of Entitlement supply;

Planning a satellite-based system that charges drivers for the distance they travel;

Building new underground expressways;

Launching a one-stop website to help commuters plan journeys;

Making public transport accessible to the elderly and handicapped; and

Doubling the rail network to 278km.

When asked if an MRT line would extend into Johor, Mr Lim said: 'We think it is good to have this link, that it will enhance the connectivity between the two countries. We are keen on it, but we have to see how best we can do this.'

CHRISTOPHER TAN

Transport Minister Raymond Lim on:

PROPOSED MRT LINE TO JOHOR

'We have a working group now which has officials from both sides. They're looking at how best to enhance connectivity between Singapore and Johor. So let's not jump the gun. Let the working group look at all the possibilities and see how best to proceed.

'We think it's good to have this link, that it will enhance the connectivity between the two countries. We are keen on it, but we have to see how best we can do this.'

MR TEO SER LUCK'S APPOINTMENT AS SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT

'I'm very pleased he's coming on board. It's always good to have fresh people in, fresh perspectives, so I welcome him on board.'

LOAD-DATE: March 30, 2008

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Appendix 4

(S.T., November 15, 2007)

THE STRAITS TIMES WEB RADIO Nov 15, 2007 • Midday Update

THE STRAITS TIMES Latest News

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November 15, 2007 Thursday

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Nov 15, 2007

S. Korea election even moves the dead

SEOUL - AS South Korea's presidential election draws near, corpses are on the move.

Most South Koreans believe that the location of a family's ancestral grave can determine their fortunes and politicians take this to heart, with several moving graves ahead of elections to places that fortune tellers say will help them get votes.

'Every individual's destiny is influenced by where that persons ancestors are buried,' said Mr Park Min Chan, an expert in 'poongsoo', which is a belief that placing objects in a harmonious way with their surroundings will help tap into the mystical power of nature.

Mr Park was called in a few months ago by one of the three top-ranked candidates running for the Dec 19 election to move the graves of nine ancestors in order to secure a good outcome in the vote.

'I selected a site on a mountain. The mountain resembles a person reading a book,' Mr Park said.

Another candidate for the vote moved family plots in 2005, local media reported, while presidential front-runner Lee Myung Bak's ancestors are deemed to be at rest in an already favourable spot.

More graves are almost certain to be moved ahead of the April vote for seats in Parliament.

Poongsoo is similar to the Chinese practise of feng shui and both mean 'a reading of wind and water'. Korean followers of poongsoo, however, place more emphasis on the arrangement of grave sites than followers of feng shui, Mr Park said.

Local media reported that former President Kim Dae Jung, who failed twice to win an open election for the presidency called in a poongsoo expert and moved his ancestral graves. Two years later he won the presidential election.

Most Koreans call in a poongsoo expert to locate family plots and afterwards, they typically do not move them.

But since poongsoo was widely used by Korea's royal families to make sure their power passed through the generations, many South Koreans are willing to accept political leadership hopefuls moving graves to better their fortunes at the polls, Mr Park said.

Home
Latest News
Free Stories
Print Edition
Prime News
Singapore
Asia
Money
World
Review
Insight
Sports
ST Forum
Life!
F.Y.I
Podcast
Vodcast
Columnists
Saturday
Special Report
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Cars
Property
Shops
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Digital Life
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http://www.straitstimes.com/Latest%2BNews/Asia/STIStory_176990.html (1 of 2)11/15/2007 2:17:59 PM

S. Korea election even moves the dead

Ancestor worship is strong in the country, even among many of those who follow Christianity According to South Korea's culture ministry, in 2005 some 53.1 per cent of South Koreans said they had a religious affiliation. Among the overall population, 22.8 per cent are Buddhist, 18.3 per cent are Protestant, 10.0 are Roman Catholic, and less than 1 per cent belong to a fringe sect.

Mr Park has given advice to many South Korean politicians and could even lend a hand to United States presidential candidates and advise them where their relatives should be buried if they want to win more votes.

'A propitious site for a grave would be the centre of a form, such as a mountain shaped like an object. Bodies buried on such sites with forms can bring huge luck to the descendants,' Mr Park said. -- REUTERS

Fake crocodile meat in HK can lead to tears

- S. Korea reschedules rush hour as crucial exam starts
- China tests tube surgery alternative to vasectomy
- Don't run off with your uniforms, departing PLA troops told
- Musharraf says he will quit army this month

Appendix 5

The Business Times Singapore

(T.B.T., February 1, 2008)

Ratting on geomancers;
Those eager to get geomancers' predictions for the new year would be scrabbling about now to find out what the Year of the Rat holds. But how is the geomancy business itself faring? CHEAH UI-HOON takes a look

SECTION: EXECUTIVE LIFESTYLE; Others Executive LifeStyle

LENGTH: 1265 words

VICTORIA Ang, 31, who runs Capita, a boutique staffing and search company, made it a point to consult her geomancer this year. She first consulted geomancer Vincent Koh in 2005, a year after she started her own company, and was so happy with the outcome that she now consults him yearly.

'I saw an improvement in the business, and in my personal life as well, so now I make it an annual practice,' she shares. 'When you're in your own business, you want to play it safe. Other than working hard, I also feel that fengshui could improve the business further,' she says.

Simon Wong, 34, a British-born Chinese who's settled here, also had a fengshui master go through his home and his office last year - the first time he's ever consulted one. 'We asked him to because he was a friend and my taiji master . . . and maybe it's psychological but my wife and I have an improved feeling of well-being at home! And business has been good all year as well,' he says.

If Ms Ang and Mr Wong's experiences are anything to go by, it seems that fengshui - the traditional Chinese art of looking at the forces of nature - is catching on among the younger set. 'Geomancy is certainly more popular now, compared with the time when my father practised it,' says geomancer Chong Swan Lek, 67, one of Singapore's better known fengshui masters, who consults for mega projects like Marina Bay Sands and more recently, the Singapore Sports Hub. 'It's partly because there are now fengshui masters who can explain things in English, and with education on fengshui available, more people are better aware and educated about it,' reckons Mr Koh of the Singapore Feng Shui Centre. He has taught thousands of students since he started conducting basic to advanced fengshui courses at Singapore Polytechnic 10 years ago.

Another reason that more people are seeking out fengshui masters could be that they want to be 'a little bit more foretold', says geomancer Colin Lee, who agrees that he's seeing younger clients nowadays and customers from other countries. 'With changes happening so rapidly these days, more people feel unsettled and they want to be prepared.'

Despite fengshui catching on among the young, it's still quite an 'open secret' in the corporate sector, with few wanting to admit to fengshui consultations. Singaporeans don't seem to be as open about it as Hong Kongers are, for example. 'That's because fengshui has had a much longer history in Hong Kong, so people are more accepting of it,' explains Mr

Koh, who adds that the newly formed International Feng Shui Association here has some 100 registered geomancers.

'There's a general perception that one's business might not be doing so well if one hires a geomancer,' says Agnes Tay, a public relations consultant.

An architect agrees, adding that while 'almost every company' consults a geomancer, few would openly admit it. 'It's seen as unscientific and unprofessional,' says the architect who's worked on several malls here.

A bank employee, who used to work for more than five years in the logistics department of a large American bank and who prefers to remain anonymous, says that the practice of geomancy is very prevalent in the banking sector, 'whenever there's space planning or re-allocation of departments'. When one department had to move, for example, the birth dates of the 15 staff members were obtained for the seating arrangements. 'We were told that the one born in the Year of the Tiger couldn't sit next to the one born in the Year of the Monkey, for example, otherwise they'd clash.'

And for spots or corners which had negative elements, certain 'remedies' were implemented, such as placing a potted plant in that corner. At the bank's branch in Capital Square, for example, several offices overlooked a sharp, pointed roof over a walkway, and that was supposed to be 'inauspicious' so more potted plants were ordered.

'It's all hush-hush, and not publicly announced that it'll be done, because this is an American company after all. And you can't expense it as 'geomancy fees' otherwise the New York office might query it. So you expense it to the contractor, as 'site prepatory work',' he says. Fees can range from $88 to $1,888 or even more, depending on the circumstances. 'Fengshui is definitely very prevalent, especially in the dealing rooms. You won't ever find red chairs there, for example, only black or blue ones,' he adds.

But fengshui remedies are now more subtle then before, say those in the know - such as embedding metal coins under doorways, installing a light in a strategic spot, placing bamboo plants along corridors and walkways or hanging abstract paintings on pillars. The stylish water feature is so common these days that few would associate it with the Chinese tradition of activating or slowing down qi in the space.

As more fengshui masters have to offer services to younger, English-speaking clients, and with the focus on design nowadays, the form that fengshui is taking is also changing, fitting in with the contemporary home and modern office.

'What I liked about Master Koh was that he didn't insist that I buy certain items from him or specifically from fengshui stores,' shares Capita's Ms Ang.

Terri Tan, interior designer/ owner of Designworx, comments that so far, the fengshui directives from her clients haven't interfered much with her design work.

Shares Rene Tan, of RT&Q Architects: 'There are different degrees of fengshui, but in general, they match basic design principles such as having a dignified entranceway, not having a bedroom above the stove, or a toilet above the kitchen.' He thinks that it's an increasing trend, with fengshui featuring in something like one out of five projects. 'The most bizarre one I've come across is the advice that the bedrooms of the husband and wife having to be at different corners of their house. So we built two master bedrooms!'

Michel Lu, whose F&B businesses include Prive at Keppel Island, notes that if you consult geomancers then you have to follow their recommendations. Otherwise, the advice will be at the back of your mind and might make the situation worse if you're always second-guessing it. His former business partner had requested for a fengshui consultation at his last bar, Centro 360, which led to a space deployment (because the sharp edge of the marble bar was pointing towards the entrance) which did work as the bar took off after that.

But he didn't engage a fengshui master for his latest island outpost. 'I don't disbelieve it as what some fengshui masters say can be useful,' says Mr Lu. 'I see it from the standpoint that it's practical, rather than superstitious.'

Superstition or not? There's certainly an amount of faith to be exercised in fengshui, most clients agree, as they can't explain its success (or failure), even if geomancers insist that it's a science. It's much like how Christian businessman Alfred Wong would credit God's blessings on his company's - Noel Gifts - success, besides having 'the right strategy, a good team and core values' as he doesn't practise fengshui.

Anyhow, with fengshui beliefs prevalent here, sometimes companies would openly declare the project's positive fengshui to inspire public confidence. Says Pascal Savino, design manager at Dragages Singapore, one of the partners of the consortium that won the bid for the new Sports Hub: 'This is part of the culture here, so knowing a project has good fengshui would inspire confidence in it.'

Sometimes, the inexplicable still has a part to play in the practical world of business, which explains why the geomancy business is thriving.

LOAD-DATE: January 31, 2008

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Appendix 6

The Straits Times (Singapore)
(S.T., January 18, 2004)

Who says fengsui is monkey business?

Wong Kim Hoh

ADELINA Pang obviously lives the good life.

She wears a ring with a whopping solitaire and other classy platinum jewellery, sports a gem-encrusted Rolex and drives a Jaguar.

The 37-year-old also positively glows with health.

She defies the stereotype of geomancers as wizened old men, and looks more like a well-heeled society lady.

Before she took up geomancy 10 years ago, she was the personal assistant to the CEO of a multinational corporation. She speaks English and works with a computer besides her luo pan (geomancer's compass).

'I suppose fengshui is a calling. I guess I was born to do this.'

She took up the art when fengshui dramatically improved the health of her first-born more than 10 years ago. Married to a businessman, she has two daughters aged 10 and six.

Ms Pang studied under a famous geomancer now in his 70s and is today very sought after in her own right.

She has been interviewed by the BBC and CNA and is regularly sought out by newspapers in Singapore and the region.

Besides lectures and courses, she also does more than 20 readings a month. Her client base ranges from yuppies to some of the biggest corporations in Singapore.

Q Aren't fengshui masters supposed to be old men carrying big luo pans? You, however, are a woman, speak English and use a computer. Does that work against you? Or is it an advantage?

A There's a Cantonese saying: 'You don't call every man with a moustache your father.' My sifu (teacher) once told me that geomancers in the past all looked old probably because their masters would impart their knowledge a bit at a time. By the time they had learnt everything, they had become ancient.

My sifu set up a school and I did structured modular courses and had to sit for exams. Modern geomancers do not wear robes or are affiliated to temples. Be careful of big titles and too much window dressing.

I think being a woman works to my advantage. Some folks, especially women, are more comfortable with me. After all, there are often stories about how they get molested or cheated by quacks.

The world is also changing, we have to be modern. The fact that I speak English puts people at ease. My PDA and my handphone keep me organised, I can retrieve information easily for reference.

Q You guys charge hundreds or even thousands for a reading. Sounds very lucrative. If I were to lose my job and still needed to live comfortably, how easy is it for me to learn the skill and be a geomancer?

A Frankly, I invested not only a lot of money, but also time to learn geomancy. Of course, there are many self-taught people in practice. I won't say it's easy or hard. Having a sifu to give guidance is best. But like he says, it's often a matter of affinity.

You can read up but you have to decide if the info given is accurate. The roots of fengshui are traceable to the classic I-Ching (The Book Of Changes).

In recent years, pseudo or New Age fengshui has become popular. It's really about marketing items which claim to bring good luck, gimmicks to cheat laymen. Authentic fengshui, as opposed to pseudo fengshui, deals with matters of energy and is personal to each individual.

Q So is it an art or a science? Are geomancers like priests? Is it a calling?

A It's a natural science. There are formulas and methodology. It's not plucked out of thin air. Fengshui has nothing to do with religion although there are grand masters who are also Taoists. Fengshui can be practised regardless of any religious belief, culture, race and in any part of the world.

Q In Chinese, geomancy means wind and water. If I were to install lots of aquariums in the apartment and keep the fans running all day long, will it help?

A Having lots of water in the wrong place can cause more harm than good. Instead of bringing you more wealth, it can bring you more headaches and quarrels. Keeping the fan running all day will not only give you a huge utility bill but also more trips to the doctor.

Q Ever since moving into a new apartment, my friend has broken off with his girlfriend and been constantly frustrated both professionally and personally. He refuses to see a geomancer because he believes that a person shouldn't believe in mumbo jumbo and instead take control of his own destiny. What is your take on that?

A Fengshui is not mumbo jumbo. It's understanding the forces of nature and how to tap into your energy cycle to make things work for you.

Effective fengshui is not ready-made. It's not a homogeneous effect that applies to everyone and everything. The best results require a highly personal approach, and recommendations specifically tailored for an individual based on his date and time of birth.

Your friend may like to visit my website windnwater88.com to use the kua calculator. It generates a personalised reading. With it, he can find out what his favourable directions are. He can use these to position his bed and stove. Hopefully, he has his main door facing one of his favourable directions too.

Q Is the Merlion a good fengshui symbol for Singapore? Why?

A The Merlion is our guardian of wealth. It keeps the water moving in our Singapore River, so that the qi (energy) would not be stagnant.

Q The Year of The Monkey is upon us soon. Tell us what we can look forward to.

A For those of you wanting to get a new home, this is one of the best times because the property market will be depressed. Husbands should watch their wallets because their better halves will be spending more time travelling or at spas beautifying or keeping themselves youthful because the metal (jewellery) and water (travel, spas, beauty) trades will be buoyant.

People born in the Year of the Monkey and the Tiger should keep a low profile because they offend the Grand Duke or the Commander of the Year.

Q Apparently a shop here in Singapore has been doing a roaring trade selling red underwear with monkey patterns. People buy them because they believe it will bring them good luck. What do you think?

A This has nothing to do with fengshui. I guess for some people, red undies are a turn-on.

However, there is a double spring this year which means good tidings. So, the Year of the Monkey is a good year to get married or have babies.

Q Finally, I'm dying to strike 4-D. Can you give me some fengshui tips to better my chances.

A Try putting a water feature in the north part of your house this year because the prosperity star is in the north this year. When you strike, remember to buy me coffee.

SECTION: Talk

LENGTH: 1084 words

LOAD-DATE: January 17, 2004

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

Appendix 7

IFSA Newspaper Advertisement

(S.T., December 12, 2008)

Appendix 8

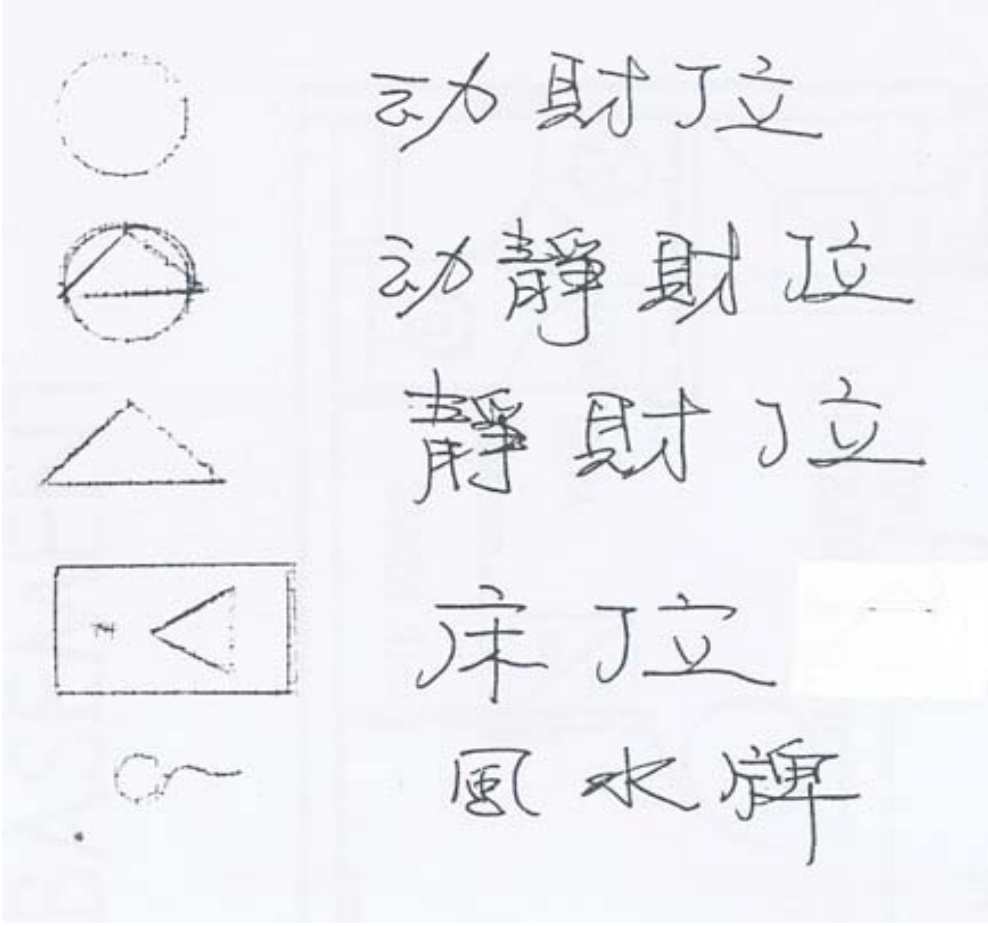
Identification of Auspicious Dates in Mini Calendar

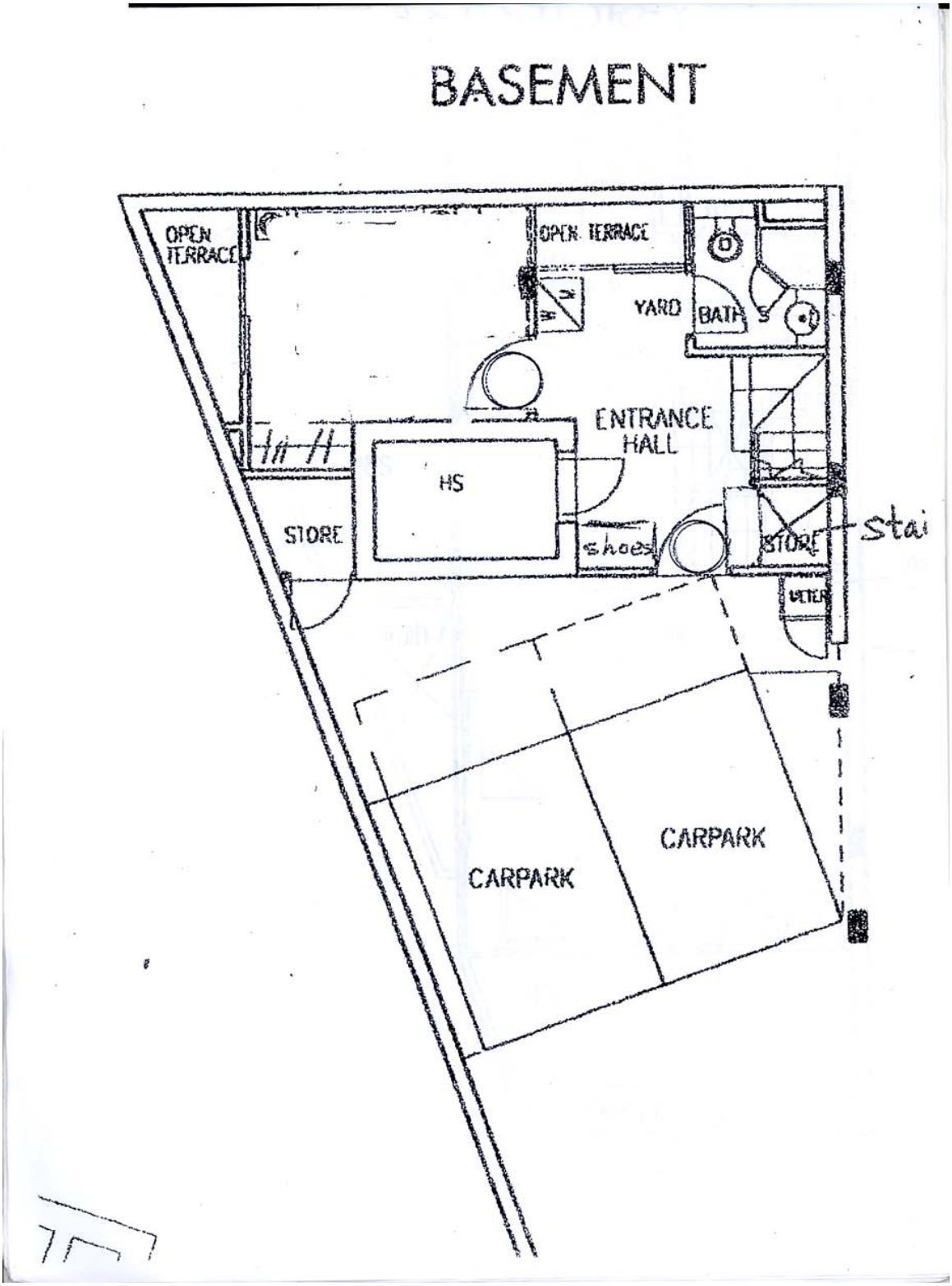
(Teacher Yeo's Telephone and Annual Calendar Booklet)

Appendix 9

Identification of Fengshui Sectors in Residence Floor Plan

(Teacher Yeo's Fengshui Audit)

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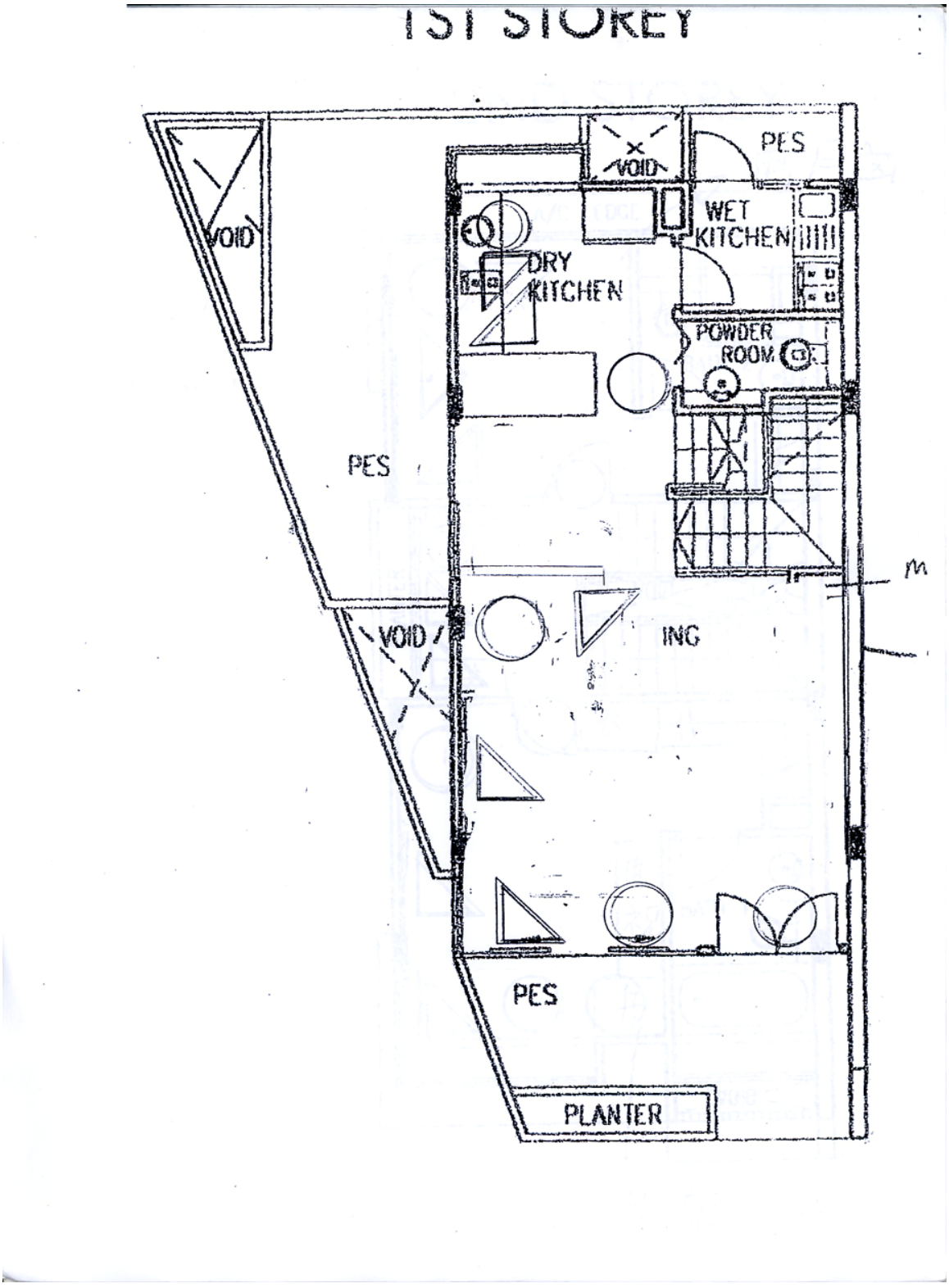
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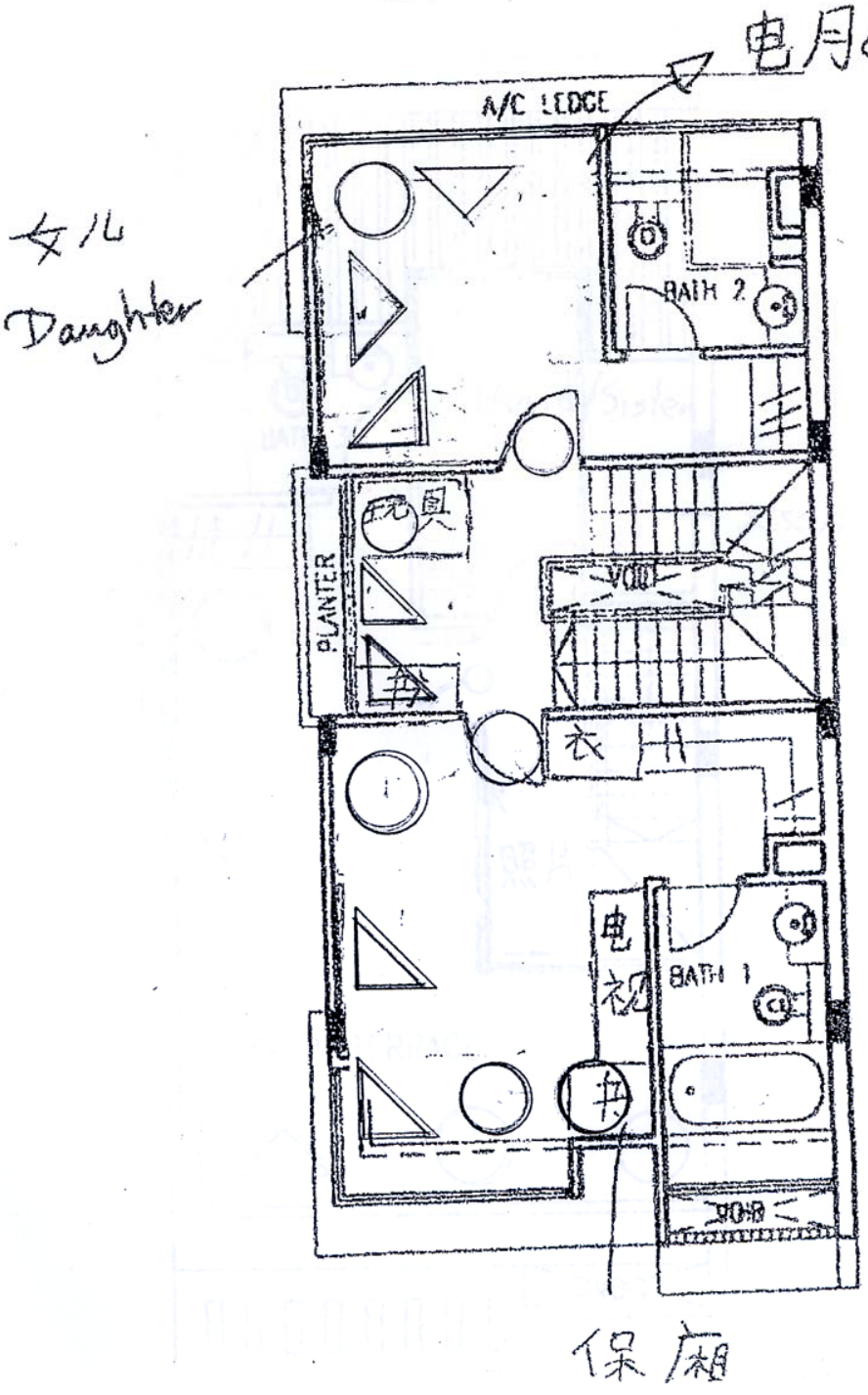

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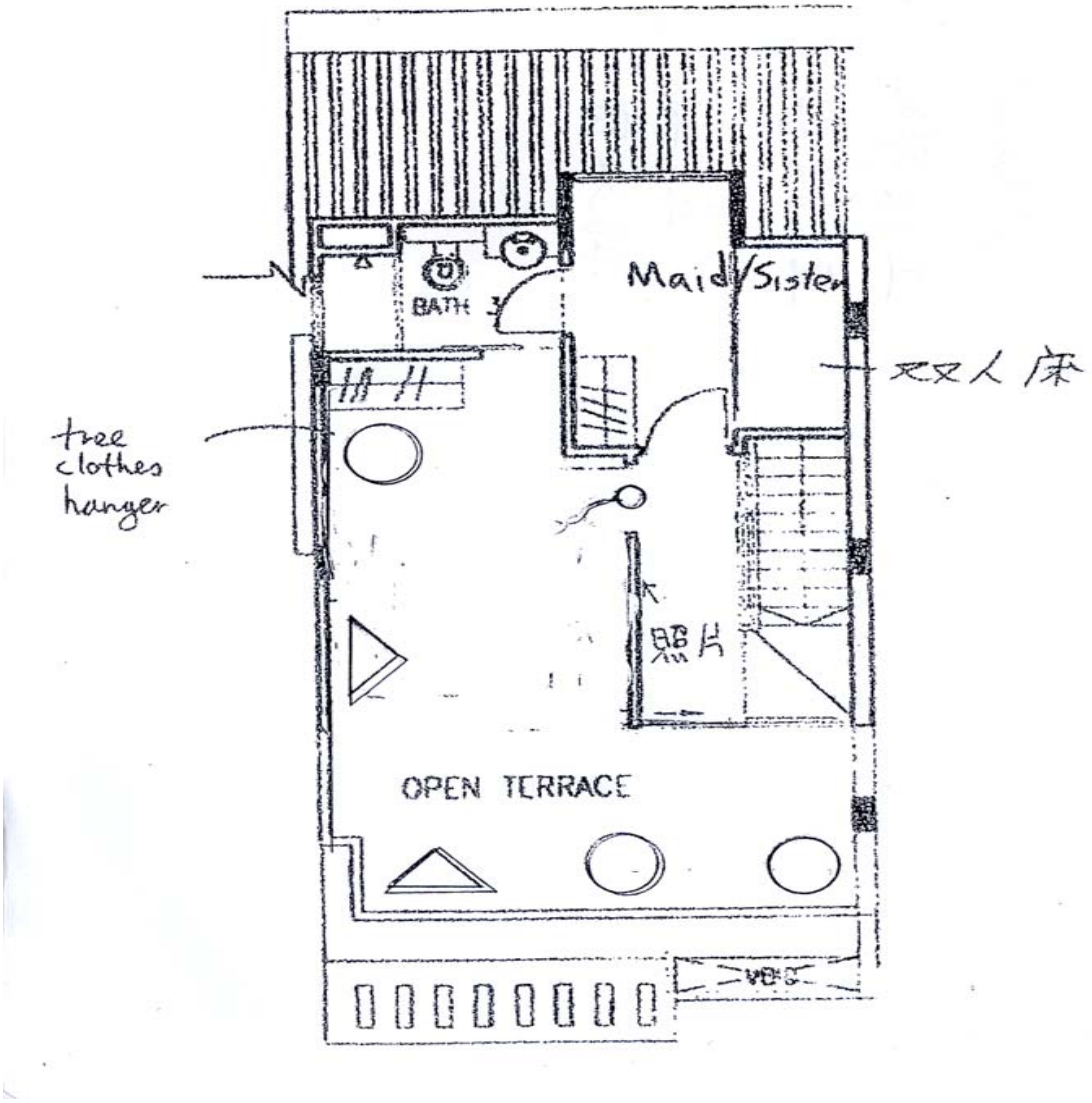

Appendix 10

The Straits Times (Singapore)

(S.T., April 19, 2009)

Business degrees lose their attraction; Varsity applicants opt for science and arts as they scan the job scene down the road

BYLINE: Sandra Davie, Senior Writer

LENGTH: 760 words

The eye-popping six-figure salaries that banks were throwing at freshly minted graduates in recent years made business faculties the first choice for many university applicants.

Never mind if the applicants were clearly more suited for engineering or the sciences, or even medicine or law.

But the recession has provided a reality check this year.

All those stories of final-year students failing to land a job, let alone a high-paying one in a bank, have had a sobering effect. Applicants are now rethinking their choices.

There is a shift away from business to courses such as arts and social sciences, which offer surer job prospects in teaching and the civil service.

Applications to the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Singapore Management University (SMU) surged this year to 61,560, up 5 per cent from 58,606 last year.

Of the total, 37,690 applications were from A-level students and 23,870 from polytechnic graduates. Most applied for two, if not all three, universities.

In all, 15,210 places will be given out this year to local students, up from 14,200 last year.

The Education Ministry did not give a breakdown on course preferences this year but said fewer applicants listed business as their first choice.

NUS, NTU and SMU have all seen a dip of between 10 per cent and 20 per cent for business, while more have applied to take up arts and social sciences, economics, teaching, computing and some engineering degrees.

NUS vice-provost (education) Tan Thiam Soon, who oversees admissions, said school leavers had flocked to the business faculty in recent years, attracted by the high salaries paid by banks.

'Even students who would excel as engineers or scientists wanted to do business,' he said.

'But now, with the finance sector cutting back on jobs, they are more realistic. They are going where they think the jobs are going to be in four years' time, when they graduate. Teaching seems to be one of those sectors. The Government has said it will take the opportunity to hire more teachers and the salaries for teachers look pretty good these days.'

The science and the arts and social sciences faculties of NUS have among the biggest intakes for freshmen, with well over 1,000 students a year.

Professor Lalit Goel, who heads admissions at NTU, said the upbeat job prospects for teachers also explain the rise of 50 per cent to 60 per cent in applications for teaching degree courses at the National Institute of Education, which is a part of NTU.

NUS and NTU also report an increase in applicants for some engineering courses this year - in civil, materials, computer and environmental engineering.

NUS' Prof Tan, a civil engineer by training, said the spike is related to the courses' better job prospects: 'Students have realised that there will always be a need for civil engineers in a built-up city like Singapore, because there is constant regeneration.'

Issues such as climate change have also made environmental engineering 'sexy' again.

NTU's Prof Goel said: 'Students see opportunities in exciting new areas such as waste recycling, solar energy, water technology and electric cars.'

University-bound students told The Sunday Times that they are going where they think jobs will be in the coming years.

A-level holder Dennis Lee, 21, said he was initially set on business but applied for arts and social sciences instead after hearing how his business graduate cousin had difficulty landing a job.

'It's quite scary how my cousin went for half a dozen job interviews and has yet to land anything. So I told myself I have to be realistic,' he said.

'The banks are laying off people, but the Government is hiring. With a BA, I can go into the civil service or teaching, which I don't mind because I like dealing with young people.'

The Education Ministry announced last year that it was going to take advantage of the downturn by embarking on a hiring spree, aiming to sign up about 7,500 people this year. It plans to fill 3,500 teaching and teaching support staff positions, and another 4,000 posts at tertiary institutions and kindergartens.

Polytechnic graduate Karen Oei, 21, believes that it is better to take up general degrees rather than go into specific disciplines. She has applied for a place in the science faculty at NUS.

'Now you can expect to have to change jobs several times in a lifetime. General degrees give you wider options. With majors in maths and chemistry, I can join the manufacturing industry, join the banks, insurance companies or become a maths teacher.'

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LOAD-DATE: May 3, 2009

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Appendix 11

The Straits Times (Singapore)

(S.T., June 12 2008)

What were 24 S'pore undergrads doing in Moscow last week?;
They are examples of 'world-ready' students - Singaporeans who are acquiring a global outlook by going overseas

BYLINE: Maria Almenoar & Sumathi V. Selvaretnam

LENGTH: 471 words

MR CORNELIUS Chang, 25, a final-year student at the Singapore Management University (SMU), is spending his university break in Russia.

He and 23 fellow undergraduates spent last week in Moscow presenting Russian consumer trends to Singapore businessmen there.

'We had to conduct ourselves like business people, hand out name cards and network,' said Mr Chang of his 10-day study mission.

Last year, 1,500 of SMU's 5,000 students went abroad. The National University of Singapore (NUS) sent more than 10,000 of its 24,000 undergraduates overseas, while Nanyang Technological University logged about 6,300 trips among its 21,000 students.

The target set by the Education Ministry in 2005 was for one in two university students to have at least one overseas experience, whether in community work or exchange programmes.

The objective is to make them 'world-ready', said Education Minister Ng Eng Hen yesterday as he addressed alumni of Australian universities here for their annual convention.

Going global - whether in acquiring a global outlook or a global partner - is one way forward for tertiary institutions. For example, NUS and the Australian National University offer joint degrees while polytechnics have tied up with specialised institutions.

The thrust of Singapore's education system, said Dr Ng, was to keep it relevant and meaningful.

'Our higher education system is also - unapologetically, I might add - closely attuned to the need to make education relevant to help Singaporeans find a job and remain employable,' he added.

Every year, the ministries of Manpower, Trade and Industry, and Education look at the economic prospects for graduates and the demand before setting places in the institutions.

He noted that countries around the world are keen to up their graduate numbers, as is the case in Singapore.

The question is how to do it, as 'expanding education thoughtlessly may actually weaken the link with growth'.

Dr Ng pointed out that in China, 1.2 million of the 4.1 million Chinese graduates in 2006 had no security that their degrees would be relevant to the market.

Over in Singapore, the emphasis is to build higher education institutions at varying levels to cater to a range of academic ability.

They differ in mission and types of students but all must aim to be 'the best in class'.

The Institute of Technical Education is a 'shining jewel', he said, noting that it took the inaugural global Harvard-IBM Innovations Award in Transforming Government last year for its vocational education model.

At the higher end, universities here must push in the direction of research and broad-based subjects to stay relevant and attractive.

'As the numbers grow, so does the competition. Even top universities all over the world have had to respond to new competitive challenges,' he said.

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LOAD-DATE: June 11, 2008

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Appendix 12

The Straits Times (Singapore)

(S.T., November 27, 2009)

Was Chinese wrongly taught for 30 years?;
A fresh controversy over second language policy has erupted with Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew's remarks that the Government had proceeded on the wrong assumptions for 30 years. Did it really go wrong? If so, how can it be rectified? Insight traces the twists and turns of a policy that has led to much weeping and gnashing of teeth among students, parents and teachers.

BYLINE: Clarissa Oon & Kor Kian Beng

SECTION: INSIGHT

LENGTH: 2347 words

FOR Chinese Singaporeans who had struggled with their mother tongue in school, Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew's recent remarks that bilingual education had proceeded on the wrong assumptions for 30 years were a breath of fresh air.

One of those who felt vindicated was Mr Andrew Koh, 43, who studied at an English-stream mission school.

It was there where he developed 'a phobia of the Chinese language, no thanks to the rigid way it was taught', says Mr Koh. 'I am sure we all feel vindicated by MM Lee's acknowledgement and now know that it is not because we are intellectually inferior.'

Back in the 1970s, Chinese was taught in much the same way to all students - whether they came from English-speaking backgrounds with little exposure to Mandarin, or lived and breathed the language in traditional Chinese-medium schools that still existed then.

This meant that Mr Koh and his schoolmates at St Andrew's Primary and Secondary schools had to memorise unfamiliar words and passages 'with lots of 'ting xie' (spelling tests) thrown in'.

'It was a torture and very pressurising as it was pure memory work with no context to learning the language,' recalls Mr Koh, a director and general manager at Canon Singapore.

In Mr Lee's view, the problem of how to teach Chinese as a second language was effectively fixed - somewhat - only in 2004, through a modular system customising the teaching of primary school Chinese to different language abilities.

Most of today's Chinese teachers are bilingual - compared to their Chinese-educated predecessors - and better able to engage their young charges. But the policy is still 'not completely right' and must be fine-tuned, Mr Lee said last week at the opening of a centre to upgrade Chinese-language teaching.

Hence, the newly launched Singapore Centre for Chinese Language (SCCL) must explore ways to make learning Chinese fun for students, he said. This is because fewer children these days have a Mandarin-speaking home environment to fall back on. Official figures show that three out of five children entering Primary 1 this year come from English-speaking homes.

For Mr Koh, unimaginative teaching turned him off Chinese - though fortunately not for life. Five years ago, he took a Chinese refresher course at the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce which 'opened his eyes to the rich historical heritage and beauty of the Chinese language'.

If only it had been taught differently when he was in school, says the man who barely scraped through his O-level Chinese examination.

Education as 'political football'

MUCH ink has been spilt in the newspapers, and many tears shed, over the last 40 years as policymakers, educators, parents and students grappled with the impact of bilingualism.

From independence in 1965, Singapore began aggressively pursuing a two- tongue education policy. The thinking was, and still is, that a command of English would give its economy a competitive edge in the region, as well as facilitate communication among the different races. This would be supplemented by the mother tongue to give each race cultural ballast.

The devil was in the details of implementation - especially as language and education were highly emotive subjects that became 'political football' among different interest groups, as Mr Lee noted in 1978 when he was prime minister.

On one side, there was the Mandarin- speaking community worried about declining Chinese language standards - particularly after the closure of Chinese-medium schools in the mid-1980s. Members of this group had their share of struggles in having to improve their English, and feared the Government was catering too much to the needs of English speakers.

On the other side of the debate were the English-speaking Chinese Singaporeans who felt not enough was being done to help their children improve in the Chinese language. Some in this group felt the language had been forced on them.

Mr Lee was to intervene many times, as PM, in this deeply polarising debate - as well as later, in the 2004 review of the Chinese-language curriculum.

What went wrong?

THE controversy over the bilingual policy started in the 1970s.

The Government began assigning greater weight to both first and second languages in examinations, and passing both became a requirement for advancement to pre-university and beyond. Many students had trouble coping with two languages, especially given the prevailing dialect-speaking home environment at the time. The failure rate was astounding.

From 1975 to 1977, more than 60 per cent of those who sat for the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) or the O levels failed either English or Chinese, or both. The bilingual issue sparked many letters to the newspapers - from anguished parents detailing their children's difficulties in learning Chinese, as well as from defenders of the Chinese language.

One parent who criticised the policy was Mrs Pauline Tan, in her letter to The Straits Times in 1989. She said then it was the key reason behind her family's decision to migrate to Australia. She felt that her son was a victim of the boring way the Chinese language was taught then. She also argued that the policy was too harsh and inflexible, especially for students from schools that were traditionally much stronger in English.

There are no available figures on the number of Singaporeans who migrated because of their children's struggle with the language. Experienced Chinese teachers who have been teaching in English-dominant schools since the late 1970s say they did not encounter former students who migrated as a result of difficulties with the Chinese language.

A former Singaporean, who has worked as an immigration lawyer in Melbourne for the past eight years, says she has not met any Singaporean families with children who migrated there as a result of the bilingual policy.

She says: 'I do not think that the bilingual policy alone is a strong enough factor to make Singaporeans migrate. From what I have gathered from my Singaporean clients, the main reasons are cost of living and stressful environment.'

A good gauge of the number of Singaporean students struggling with Chinese at that time could perhaps be seen in the passing rate of the subject at PSLE level.

Madam Foo Siew Lin, a senior teacher at St Joseph's Institution Junior since 1975, says that in the 1980s, about half of the 260-plus pupils entering Primary 1 at the school each year would have difficulty with the Chinese language. During that period, about 35 per cent of the Primary 6 pupils managed to pass the subject at the PSLE, says Madam Foo. Now, it is above 90 per cent, although detractors argue that the higher percentage is a result of lower benchmarks in marking.

From the 1970s, the Government was already aware of the difficulties this particular group of children from English- speaking families had with learning Chinese, but did not tackle this problem until much later.

One reason was that they were still a minority in Singapore at that point. In 1982, only 10 per cent of the Primary 1 cohort came from English-speaking families, compared with 59 per cent this year.

Another factor was that all the Chinese teachers back then came from Chinese-educated backgrounds and knew no other way of teaching Chinese.

Mr Lee also acknowledged that his mistaken assumption then was that a child who was bright enough could master two languages. For that reason, Chinese lessons in the past were pitched at too difficult a level and 'successive generations of students paid a heavy price because of my ignorance'.

But not all students from English- speaking backgrounds were complaining.

Mr Edward Ong, 57, who went to Anglo-Chinese primary and secondary schools, was one of those who felt they had benefited from learning Chinese the hard way. He recalls how the lao shi (teacher) would make the class practise writing fan ti zi (traditional Chinese characters) instead of jian ti zi (simplified Chinese characters).

Says Mr Ong, a retired banker and headhunter: 'We had to repeat and recite after the teacher, over and over again. But it actually gave us a very sound foundation in the language. With certain things, you just have to grit your teeth and go through with it. It is the same with learning English, isn't it?'

Chinese teachers in English-dominant schools also defended the old way of teaching, saying that it had its merits in the early years. Says Madam Foo, in Mandarin: 'We can't say that the method back then was wrong. Most of the students we had then came from Mandarin-speaking families and had less trouble during lessons.'

Chinese teachers did not have the benefits of the computer, Internet and new media technologies widely available these days to make the lessons more fun, she notes. But now, she says, 'society has changed, with more students coming from English-speaking families'.

She adds: 'Students these days also need more visual and physical stimulus. So there is a greater need for teachers to make Chinese lessons more fun through games, cartoons and music.'

The remedies taken

AFTER the 1991 General Election - when four seats fell to the opposition - an attempt was made to raise Chinese-language standards. This was viewed partly as a way to appease the Mandarin-speaking community, many of whom were perceived to have voted for the opposition.

However, the Government backpedalled in the late 1990s, recognising that a growing number of students were coming from English-speaking homes and that their Chinese textbooks were too difficult for them.

To cater to differing language backgrounds, a 1999 review committee led by then Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, now PM, introduced the Chinese B curriculum for weaker students and slashed textbook content, while making it easier for more students with the aptitude to do Higher Chinese.

Linguistic ability and academic ability are two different things, MM Lee - who stepped down as PM in 1990 to become Senior Minister and then MM in 2004 - had realised by this point.

The B curriculum, however, proved unpopular, with many parents viewing it as a stigma if their children enrolled in it.

So in 2004, the current modular system for teaching Chinese in primary school was introduced. This gives children with little exposure to Chinese additional support, while allowing those with backgrounds or ability in Chinese to go further.

In recent years, the bilingualism debate has been tempered by geopolitical realities. The rise of China has melted away much of the resistance of those from English-speaking backgrounds towards learning Chinese, now that they see its economic value.

This can be seen in the rising number of students opting to do Higher Chinese. Some 27 per cent of O-level candidates took Higher Chinese last year, compared with 19 per cent two years ago.

In the last 10 years, it appears that students have had less trouble with the Chinese language compared to their predecessors in the English-dominant schools of the 1970s and 1980s.

The pass rate for Chinese, whether at PSLE, O levels or A levels, has hovered around 95 per cent or better in the last 10 years, on a par with the English pass rate.

However, there is still a small group of about one in 10 Primary 6 pupils who are above average in other subjects, but do badly in Chinese. These students are in the top 30 per cent for English, Mathematics and Science, but in the bottom 10 per cent for Chinese.

Going forward, Chinese-language educators say the challenge is to stimulate the interest of weaker students, while not compromising standards for those with an aptitude for the Chinese language.

The future: Using English to teach Chinese?

THE modular approach gives Chinese teachers leeway to use interactive teaching methods. Drama and IT resources are commonly used in Chinese classes. The system also places more emphasis on oral communication and reading, compared to writing, for primary school pupils.

MM Lee believes schools should take a step further in reaching out to students from English-speaking families - by using English to teach Chinese.

A task force will make proposals soon on how this group of children can be taught the language, Education Minister Ng Eng Hen said on Sunday.

Several primary schools, most of which have traditionally been stronger in English, have used this bilingual approach to teach Chinese since 2002, with some success. One of them is Anglo-Chinese School (Junior).

Madam Lye Choon Hwan, 42, who heads the school's Chinese language department, says the bilingual approach is useful in the school for weaker pupils, especially those from English-speaking families who just cannot catch up with the lessons. About 10 per cent of the 270 pupils entering Primary 1 at the school each year are in this category, she says.

'English is used as a scaffolding to help my pupils understand concepts and clear up any misinterpretations,' she adds. 'It also melts down the psychological barrier of my pupils who have resistance to learning Chinese as they found it hard and incomprehensible.'

But, like her, educators stress that English must be used very selectively in Chinese classes, or it could become a crutch preventing students from effectively learning Chinese. Says Mrs Joanne Ng, 33, head of the Chinese department at St Andrews' School Junior: 'We do not use English unnecessarily but for select situations, like to explain complex words that students do not understand.'

SCCL's executive director Chin Chee Kuen encourages more young parents, who are the products of a bilingual education system, to use Mandarin more often with their children instead of English.

'Before the age of six is the best time for a child to learn a language. Parents could help set a foundation for him in Chinese, so that it will be easier to build on this foundation when he enters school,' says Dr Chin.

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In recent years, the bilingualism debate has been tempered by geopolitical realities.

The rise of China has melted away much of the resistance of those from English-speaking backgrounds towards learning Chinese, now that they see its economic value.

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Appendix 13

Chinese Newspaper Report on Singapore Polytechnic's 10 Years of Fengshui Courses

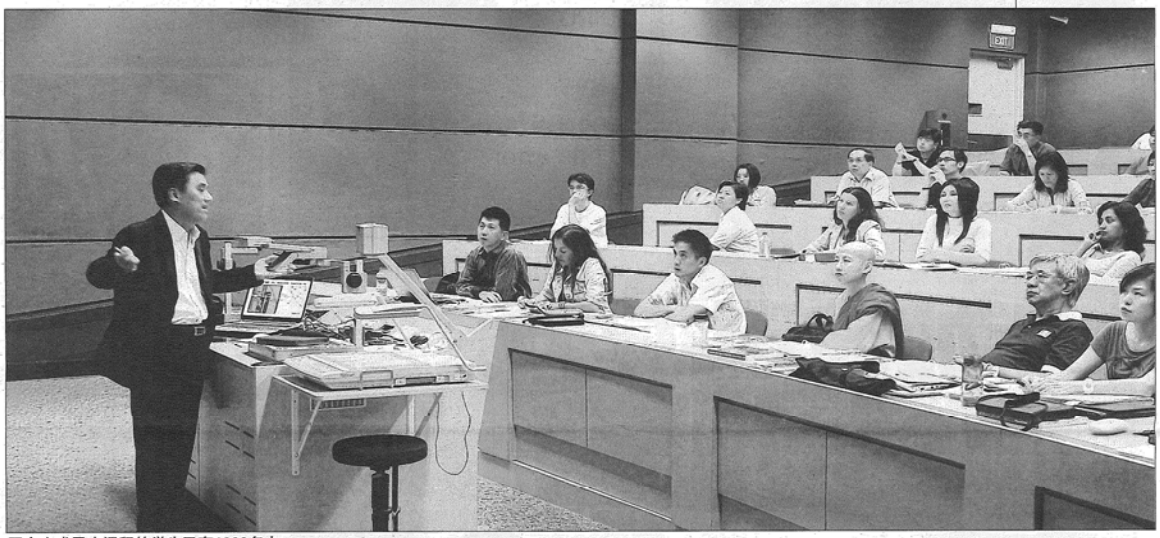
(zbW, 22 March 2009)

专题

摒除迷信 从科学看风水

新加坡理工学院 10年风水课

文⊙杨全龙
摄影⊙龙国雄



至今完成风水课程的学生已有1000多人。

新加坡理工学院于1998年推出风水课，是本地最早，也是目前唯一推出风水课的大专学府。

课程十年来屹立不倒，还成为最受欢迎的科目之一。

学院负责人和讲师受访时说，受欢迎的最大原因是课程摒除迷信，拥抱科学。

风水在全球普及，已是不争的事实。在讲求理性的新加坡，这门古老的学问在民间其实大行其道。长久以来，风水学是科学，还是无稽之谈，始终受人争议。但随着社会生活水准的提高，人们更愿意从不同学科的角度来看待风水。

新加坡理工学院便于1998年推出风水课，是本地最早，也是本地目前唯一推出风水课的大专学府。课程十年来屹立不倒，还成为最受欢迎的科目之一。学院负责人和讲师受访时说，最大原因是摒除迷信，拥抱科学。

洋人远道而来学风水

新加坡理工学院的延续教育与培训处，1998年开办“风水的基本科学”（Basic Science of Fengshui），向专业人士及公众传授风水知识。到现在，完成课程的学生已经有1000多人，其中不乏来自海外的学生。

“风水的基本科学”主讲导师许锦华说，这些年来，这个课程已经在外国建立起一定名声，许多洋人为了成为专业风水师，而远赴重洋到新加坡上课。

他笑说：“虽然外国学院有许多提供风水大专文凭，但工院这个‘基本课’与外国文凭相比，可算得上是硕士班。”

讲师信心满满。翻阅课程大纲，涉及的知识的深度和广度，都可感受到这门课程的专业性。

为期三个月，24堂课的“风水的基本科学”是入门课程，但课程内容涵盖面非常广泛。从风水源起、不同学派区分、如何使用罗盘、阴阳五行的相互作用、八字的算法，到如何运用不同各派风水原理来计算风水等等。

许锦华说：“其实，风水背后的支撑原理是数学、物理、环境科学、天文学、地理和自然学等学科。课程内容旨在突出这一点。学生也能够通过课程，学习古中华文化和古代中国建筑学。”

课程着重理论，学生也有机会随同讲师到本地各大特色建筑物现场实习，了解风水学如何运用在现代建筑。学生也会学习通过掌上电脑，运用许锦华开发的风水计算软件。

到了课程尾声，他们必须各自审查一户人家的风水，并以毕业作业的方式报告成绩。

不违反务实和逻辑

许锦华说，课程的最终目的是让每名学生都有能力运用基本的风水原理和计算法审查风水。此外，他也向学生强调，不违反务实和逻辑的大前提下，将风水和建筑学巧妙结合。

他说：“我就曾经遇过风水师，为了顾全这方面，颠覆原有的建筑设计，例如把厨房变成主人房，给建筑师和设计师带来极大麻烦。其实，风水运用得法，大多时候只需要进行小改动，在不影响传统建筑理念的情况下，达到消灾解难的目的。”

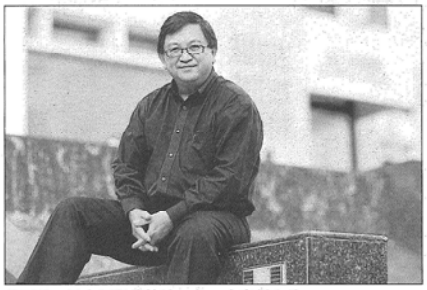
至于有人质疑风水的可信度，许锦华反驳说，风水之所以越来越盛行，是因为它的确有效。

他说：“以我个人的经验来说，如果运用风水后不能解决顾客问题，他们为什么还会继续用我，或是介绍新顾客给我？对我来说，西方科学与东方科学着墨点不同，中医学和西医学理论和实践也有很大分叉，但重点还是有效。风水学亦然。”

学院：
风水课为专业人士开办

新加坡理工学院1998年开办英语风水课，除了顺应公众要求，也是测试大家对这门学科的反应。不料，课程受到在职人士热烈欢迎，10年来未曾间断过。

延续教育与培训处副董事曾万益说，1998年第一班只有10多人，现在，每年开办三次，每次约1700元的课程，能够吸引到近40人报名。


曾万益：风水课程能持续10年，在意料之外。

曾万益说："这个课程能持续10年，在我们的意料之外。这显示，用英语和科学方式教导风水课是受欢迎的。"

他指出，校方在与许锦华拟定"风水的基本科学"课程内容时，首要任务是除去迷信、没有根据和无法解释的元素，将焦点放在与数学、物理、环境科学挂钩的"风水的科学"。

他说："此外，通过毕业作业核试的学生，也会获理工学院颁发的'Certificate of Performance'证书。"

他说，这门课其实是为建筑师、室内设计师、房屋经纪、地产专才等专业人士量身定制，希望这群人能够将基本的风水知识运用在各自的专业，达到增值效用；但基于个人兴趣而报名的公众也不少。

讲师：
希望风水课成为理工学院文凭课程


许锦华开发的风水计算软件。

61岁的风水课讲师许锦华，60年代开始从事建筑业，为公共机构和私人投资者策划并兴建建筑项目。在设计和建造房屋时，客户很多时候都要求顾全风水考量，因此常常与风水师接触。久而久之，许锦华对风水学产生兴趣，开始在闲暇时间研究风水。

多年来，他搜罗并读遍东方的风水著作，也研究各自风水学派的常规定律。他说，家中有百多本风水藏书。

由于无师自通，为了印证所学，他也前往中、港、台等地，同那里的风水师会面交流。

有趣的是，许锦华从小受英文教育，向来很少碰华文书籍，对于精深难懂的风水专门书籍却如鱼得水，他认为这是缘分。

他说："获取一定的风水知识后，我在机缘巧合下获得上台机会，向建筑同业和公众，以英语演讲风水，结束后的反响大乎我的意料，大家都要求我透露多一点知识。那时，我就意识到自己进修的知识得到认同，给予很大的信心。"

他当时也发现，风水学在本地非常受欢迎，但许多风水业者都是华文背景，只谙英语的国人和洋人要学习风水求助无门。他萌生以英语教导风水的念头，找上新加坡理工学院，联手开办"风水的基本科学"课程。

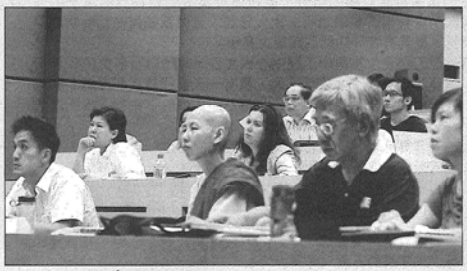
许锦华也写了四本有关风水的英文书籍，并研发出四套有关易经、紫微斗数的电脑计算软件。

他坦言："与大专学府合作，是为了着重于传授科学角度的风水知识。"

许锦华希望接下来能够同工院合作，推出高级的风水课程。

他说："我的理想是，风水课将来也能够同工程、工商管理一样，成为理工学院正统文凭课程。"

课室
好奇心、误解……


来上风水课的人，各行业都有。

记者在课堂现场所见，有年轻人，服装笔挺的专业人士，也有好几名洋人。

刚辞去执行秘书，在家庭相夫教子的张淑芬（41岁）出于好奇心，在空暇时间报读风水课程。上了课之后，才发现风水背后原来有这么深奥的学问。

她说："现在才了解，要成为一名风水师并不简单。除了要有精准的眼光，也必须记得这么多理论和计算法。我计划完成课程后，进一步报读高级课程。"

市场执行员颜清发原本以为风水是迷信，毫无科学根据，经过朋友的游说下，决定来上课。

他说："原来，很多人都像我一样，对风水存有不少误解。现在才明白，风水和宗教是两回事。我希望学成后，通过风水知识让家庭更为圆满，也能为遇到难题的朋友以风水的角度排忧解难。"

20出头的郑静愉则与友人一起上课，目前担任录像剪辑师的她希望这门学问能协助她转换跑道。

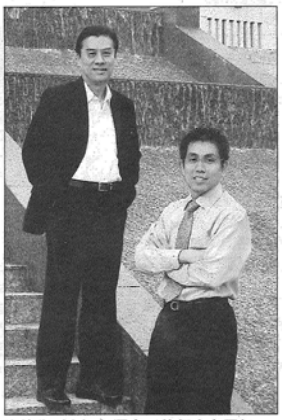
她说："我不久后可能跟随意大利籍男友回返他的家乡。学会这门一技之长，或许能够让我打下基础，在意大利成为风水师。"

学生
科技人变风水师

报名风水课的学生当中，几乎有一成接着进修高级风水课，成为全职风水师，谭奋延（43岁）是其中一人。

他年轻时在新加坡理工学院毕业，并进入资讯科技业打拼，2001年报名修读理工学院的风水课后，为他职业生涯带来转折。

谭奋延说："课程教导的知识非常广泛，也非常注重风水背后的计算和逻辑，是让我打好风水理论的好机会。我毕业后继续进修，并向海外的风水家请教学习，累积专业的风水经验。"


许锦华（左）与谭奋延从师生变同行。

谭奋延于2003年辞去高薪工作，开创公司"Xuan Learning"，为客户提供各有关命理、风水和改运服务。他在工作中除了采用风水，也运用有关形上学（metaphysics）的其他知识。据他说，在所有的客户当中，一半是地产商、百货中心和国际公司的企业客户。基于敏感理由，他拒绝透露客户身份。

创业超过五年，谭奋延终于达到预期的营业目标，收入也可媲美上一份职业。但他表示，将会继续苦干以达到当初设下的创业理念。

他说："一般企业是通过营运开支、盈利、股价作为一家公司健康与否的指标，但我希望能提供另一种服务，通过研究公司徽章、地理位置、家具摆设，配合管理层的八字命理进行改动，提升一家企业的气运。"

Appendix 14

The Straits Times (Singapore)

August 18, 2009 Tuesday

Risks of religious fervour;
Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong spoke about the four challenges facing Singapore in his National Day Rally speech on Sunday. Here is an edited version

LENGTH: 2495 words

SO WHAT are these risks? Let me just highlight three of them.

Aggressive preaching - proselytisation. You push your own religion on others, you cause nuisance and offence. You have read in the papers recently about a couple who surreptitiously distributed Christian tracts which were offensive of other faiths, not just of non-Christians but even of Catholics. They were charged and sentenced to jail.

But there are less extreme cases too which can cause problems. We hear, from time to time, complaints about groups trying to convert very ill patients in our hospitals, who don't want to be converted, and who don't want to have the private difficult moments in their lives intruded upon.

Intolerance is another problem - not respecting the beliefs of others or not accommodating others who belong to different religions. You think of this one group versus another group, but sometimes it happens within the same family.

Sometimes we have parents from traditional religions whose children have converted.

The parents have asked to be buried according to traditional rites and their children stay away from the funeral or the wake. It's very sad. From a traditional point of view, it's the ultimate unfilial act but it does happen occasionally.

Exclusiveness is a third problem - segregating into separate exclusive circles, not integrating with other faiths. That means you mix with your own people. You'll end up as separate communities.

We foresaw these dangers 20 years ago. We passed the Bill, Maintenance of Religious Harmony, in 1989/1990.

Before we did that, then PM Lee Kuan Yew and the key ministers met all the religious leaders. We had a closed-door session at MCYS. We spoke candidly. We explained our concerns, why we wanted to move this Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act. The religious leaders spoke up candidly, they gave us their support. We moved with their support.

We continue to keep in close touch with them, to meet regularly. I do that personally, exchange views, keep the line warm and the confidence on both sides so that I know you, you know me. If there is a problem, we are not dealing with strangers but with somebody we know and trust.

Once or twice, I've had to meet them over specific difficult cases. No publicity, relying on mutual trust and the wisdom of our religious leaders to defuse tensions.

I'm very grateful for their wisdom and for their support. Because of this active work behind the scenes, we've not needed to invoke the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act for 20 years. But it's something which is important to us which we must keep for a long time.

Four basic rules

WE can never take our racial and religious harmony for granted. We must observe some basic principles to keep it the way it is.

First, all groups have to exercise tolerance and restraint. Christians cannot expect this to be a Christian society, Muslims cannot expect this to be a Muslim society. Ditto the Buddhists, the Hindus and the other groups.

Many faiths share this island. Each has different teachings, different practices.

Rules which only apply to one group cannot become laws which are enforced on everyone. So Muslims don't drink alcohol but alcohol is not banned. Ditto gambling, which many religions disapprove of, but gambling is not banned. All have to adopt 'live and let live' as our principle.

Secondly, we have to keep religion separate from politics. Religion in Singapore cannot be the same as religion in America, or religion in an Islamic country.

Take Iran, an Islamic country. Nearly everybody is Shia Muslim. Recently, they had a presidential election which was fiercely contested between Ahmadinejad and Mousavi, and the outcome was disputed. Both sides invoked Islam. So Mousavi's supporters had a battle cry - Allahu Akbar (God is Great).

In Singapore, if one group invokes religion this way, other groups are bound to say: 'I also need powerful support. We'll also push back invoking our faith.' One side insists: 'I'm doing God's work.' The other side says: 'I'm doing my God's work.' Both sides say: 'I cannot compromise. These are absolute imperatives.' The result will be a clash between different religious groups which will tear us apart. We take this very seriously. The People's Action Party reminds our candidates, don't bring all the friends from your own religious group. Don't mobilise your church or your temple or your mosque to campaign for you. Bring a multi-racial, multi-religious group of supporters. When you are elected, represent the interest of all your constituents, not just your religious group in Parliament. Speak for all your constituents.

Thirdly, the Government has to remain secular. The Government's authority comes from the people. The laws are passed by Parliament which is elected by the people. They don't come from a sacred book. The Government has to be neutral, fair. We are not against religion. We uphold sound moral values. We hold the ring so that all groups can practise their faiths freely without colliding. That's the way Singapore has to be.

You may ask: Does this mean that religious groups have no views, cannot have views on national issues? Or that religious individuals cannot participate in politics? Obviously not.

Religious groups are free to propagate their teachings on social and moral issues. They have done so on the IRs, organ transplants, 377A, homosexuality. And obviously many Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists participate in politics. In Parliament, we have people of all faiths. In the Cabinet too. People who have a religion will often have views which are informed by their religious beliefs. It's natural because it's part of you, it's part of your personality. But you must accept that other groups may have different views informed by different beliefs and you have to accept that and respect that.

The public debate cannot be on whose religion is right and whose religion is wrong. It has to be on secular, rational considerations of public interest - what makes sense for Singapore. The final requirement for us to live peacefully together is to maintain our common

space that all Singaporeans share. It has to be neutral and secular because that's the only way all of us can feel at home in Singapore and at ease.

Common spaces

LET me explain to you with specific examples.

Sharing meals. We have different food requirements. Muslims need halal food. Hindus don't eat beef. Buddhists sometimes are vegetarian. So if we must serve everybody food which is halal, no beef and vegetarian, I think we will have a problem. We will never eat meals together. So there will be halal food on one side, vegetarian food for those who need it, no beef for those who don't eat beef.

Let's share a meal together, acknowledging that we are not the same. Don't discourage people from interacting. Don't make it difficult for us to be one people.

Our schools are another example of common space where all races and religions interact. Even in mission schools run by religious groups, the Ministry of Education has set clear rules, so students of all faiths will feel comfortable.

You might ask: Why not allow mission schools to introduce prayers or Bible studies as compulsory parts of the school activity or as part of school assembly? Why not? Then why not let those who are not Christian, or don't want a Christian environment, go to a government school or go to a Buddhist school? Well, if they do that, we'll have Christians in Christian schools, Buddhists in Buddhist schools, Muslims in schools with only Muslim children and so on. I think that is not good for Singapore.

Therefore, we have rules to keep all our schools secular and the religious groups understand and accept this.

For example, St Joseph's Institution is a Catholic brother school but it has many non-Catholic students, including quite a number of Malay students. The Josephian of the Year in 2003 was a Malay student - Salman Mohamed Khair.

He told Berita Harian that initially his family was somewhat worried about admitting him to a Catholic school. He himself was afraid because he didn't know what to expect. But he still went because of SJI's good record. He said: 'Now I feel fortunate to be in SJI. Although I was educated in a Catholic environment, religion never became an issue.'

Indeed that's how it should work. I know it works because I understand that Malay students in SJI often attend Friday prayers at Baalwie Mosque nearby, still wearing their school uniforms. SJI thinks it's fine, the mosque thinks it's fine, the students think it's fine, and I think it's fine too. That's the way it should be.

Another example of common space - work. The office environment should be one which all groups feel comfortable with. Staff have to be confident that they will get equal treatment even if they belong to a different faith from their managers - especially in government departments, but in the private sector too.

I think it can be done because even religious community service organisations often have people who don't belong to that religion working comfortably and happily together. This is one very important aspect of our meritocratic society.

Thus we maintain these principles: exercise tolerance, keep religion separate from politics, keep a secular government, maintain our common space. This is the only way all groups can live in peace and harmony in Singapore.

Aware and responsible church leaders

THIS is the background to the way the Government looked at one recent issue: Aware.

We were not concerned about who would control Aware because it's just one of so many NGOs in Singapore. On homosexuality policy or sexuality education in schools, there can be strong differences in view but the Government's position was quite clear.

But what worried us was that this was an attempt by a religiously motivated group who shared a strong religious fervour to enter civil space, take over an NGO it disapproved of, and impose their agenda. It was bound to provoke a push back from groups that held the opposite view, which indeed happened vociferously and stridently.

The media coverage got caught up and I think the amplifier was turned up a bit high.

This was hardly the way to conduct a mature discussion of a sensitive matter where views are deeply divided. But most critically of all, this risked a broader spillover into relations between different religions.

I know many Singaporeans were worried about this, including many Christians. They may not have spoken aloud but they raised one eyebrow. Therefore, I'm very grateful for the very responsible stand which was taken by the church leaders. The National Council of Churches of Singapore issued a statement that it didn't support churches getting involved. There was also the statement by the Catholic Archbishop. Had these statements not been made, we would have had a very serious problem.

The Government stayed out of this but after the dust had settled, I spoke to the religious leaders, first the Christians and then the religious leaders of all faiths, so that everybody understood where we stood and what our concerns were. So we can continue to work together to strengthen our racial and religious harmony.

Unusually serious subject THIS is an unusually serious and heavy subject for a National Day Rally. Normally, you talk about babies, hongbaos, bonuses.

No bonuses tonight but a bonus lecture on a serious subject. We discussed this in Cabinet at length and decided that I should talk about this. I crafted the points carefully, circulated them many times. Different presentations in Mandarin, Malay and English, because different groups have different concerns, but a consistent message so that there's no misunderstanding.

I also invited the religious leaders to come and spend the evening with us tonight.

They can help us to help their flocks understand our limitations, to guide them to practise their faiths, taking into account the context of our society. Please teach them accommodation, which is what all faiths teach. I look forward to all the religious groups continuing to do a lot of good work for Singapore for many years to come.

Finally, let me share with you one true story which was published recently in an Indian newspaper, The Asian Age, and picked up by The Straits Times. It was about a young man from Gujarat, a Muslim, who migrated to Singapore after the Hindu-Muslim riots in Gujarat in 2002.

A train carrying Hindu pilgrims was stopped in Ahmadebad and set on fire. The circumstances were unclear but 50-odd men, women and children burnt to death, trapped in the train. The Hindus rioted. They had no doubt what the cause was. One thousand people died, mostly Muslims because Ahmadebad has a large Muslim community.

So this young Muslim decided to come to Singapore after the riots. We call him Mohammed Sheikh. It's not his real name because he still has family there. The article said: 'During the bloody riots, he watched three of his family members, including his father, getting butchered. His family had to pay for being Muslim. 'Besides losing his family and home, Mohammed lost confidence and faith in the civil society. He didn't want to spend the rest of his life cursing his destiny. He wanted to move on.'

So seven years ago, Mohammed came to Singapore and got a diploma in hospitality management. Now he is working in an eatery and he hopes to open his own business one day. He told the interviewer, had he stayed in Gujarat, 'I would have been hating all Hindus and baying for their blood, perhaps.'

Now 'he loves it when his children bring home Hindu friends and share snacks'. He told the interviewer proudly, 'My children have Christian, Buddhist, Hindu friends.'

He even hopes to bring his mother to Singapore so she can see for herself that people of different races, different faiths can be friends. The interviewer asked him what Muslim sect he belonged to and which mosque he went to in India. He said: 'I don't want to get into all that. Now I am just a Singaporean. And I am proud of it.'

This story reminds us that while we must not neglect to strengthen our harmonious society, we are in a good position.

So let us rejoice in our harmony but let us never forget what being a Singaporean means. It's not just tolerating other groups but opening our hearts to all our fellow citizens.

OUR FUTURE

IF WE stay cohesive, then we can overcome our economic challenges and continue to grow.

This is how we've transformed Singapore over the last half century - solving problems together, growing together, improving our lives.

From the Singapore River to Marina Bay, we've totally transformed Singapore over the last half century. 1959 was a moment of great change but nobody at the Padang in June 1959 imagined the change in today's Singapore.

We will continue to improve our lives, provided we work together and remain a harmonious and a cohesive society so that in another 50 years, we would have built another Singapore, which is equally unimaginable today.

The key is to stay united through rain or shine.

LOAD-DATE: August 17, 2009

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Appendix 15

The Straits Times (Singapore)

(S.T., July 24, 2009)

Jaya: Don't take harmony for granted; Fundamental problems that led to religious harmony Act still exist

BYLINE: Zakir Hussain, Political Correspondent

LENGTH: 508 words

THE biggest threat to racial and religious harmony in Singapore is complacency, Senior Minister S. Jayakumar said this week.

He worries that some Singaporeans may take for granted that all is well on this front, and thus fail to realise how fragile this harmony is.

'I worry that some of our people are taking racial and religious harmony for granted, and that is why we need to periodically remind ourselves,' he said.

Professor Jayakumar, who is also Coordinating Minister for National Security, made the point in an interview with The Straits Times on Wednesday.

In the interview, which will be published in full tomorrow, he highlighted the nexus between security and issues of race and religion, and also described his involvement in the crafting of the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (MRHA) which was passed in 1990 and came into effect in 1992.

Prof Jayakumar was Home Affairs Minister from 1985 to 1994. He also helmed the Law Ministry from 1988 to last year.

The MRHA came about against a backdrop of rising religious fervour and the mixing of religion and politics worldwide as well as in Singapore.

The Act allows the Government to issue restraining orders against preachers whose conduct or speech undermines religious harmony, and to fine and jail those who breach such orders.

In his interview, Prof Jayakumar said 'the fundamental problems' behind these moves remain even though 20 years have passed. He disclosed that from time to time, cases involving insensitive proselytisation or denigration of other religions still crop up.

These, 'if not handled properly, can lead to emotions and cause tensions', he noted. The Government's approach is to nip these problems in the bud, 'by counselling, advising and where necessary warning that it will act under the MRHA if they persist in their conduct'.

He added: 'I worry that an entire new generation which has never experienced communal conflict may believe that we have nothing to worry about, that our present religious harmony is a natural state of affairs and will never be under threat.

'I worry that people don't realise how fragile racial and religious harmony is. It is foolhardy to take these things for granted and become complacent.'

Maintaining religious harmony will always be a work-in-progress, and needs 'active monitoring and intervention when necessary', he added.

However, he noted that 'finely calibrated rules and sub-rules' were not the way to go. Rather, the way forward is to ask 'what will work in Singapore, and what will cause trouble' here.

'What we need is a common-sense approach on the part of everyone, individuals and groups...rather than one of insisting on absolute rights argued from divine authority or first principles,' he said.

Singapore's multi-religious society calls for tolerance, accommodation and a live-and-let-live approach, he said.

'If everyone insists on doing things on the basis of entitlement and rights without regard to the nature of our society and the interests of others, we will have big problems,' he said.

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See Insight

LOAD-DATE: July 23, 2009

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Appendix 16

The Straits Times (Singapore)

(S.T., July 25, 2009)

Foolhardy to take harmony for granted

SECTION: INSIGHT

LENGTH: 2682 words

Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security S. Jayakumar was Home Affairs as well as Law Minister in the late 1980s, when the Government introduced legislation to maintain religious harmony. In an exclusive interview with Insight, he looks back on the tumultuous period - and issues a warning that the tumult can return.

As Minister for Home Affairs from 1985 to 1994, and Minister for Law from 1988 to 2008, you were directly and closely involved in the crafting of the White Paper on the Maintenance of Religious Harmony and the subsequent legislation, the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (MRHA). What was the experience like?

It was personally a challenging experience to work on the White Paper and the Bill with then PM Lee Kuan Yew and other ministers. How to bring out the problems in a way that would not be misunderstood by religious leaders and groups.

I have taken many Bills through second and third readings in Parliament, but the MRHA was one of the two most unique pieces of legislation I had worked on. (The other was the Constitutional Amendments for the Elected President.)

In drafting the MRHA, I worked very closely with PM Lee Kuan Yew and former attorney-general Tan Boon Teik. It was a challenge because we really could not find a model anywhere else in the world for the kind of law we had in mind.

However, it was not the White Paper and the MRHA per se, but the entire process of debate and discussion surrounding them that helped to raise public awareness and sensitised Singaporeans to potential pitfalls always lurking in a society like ours.

In fact, the process started back in 1987 when PM Lee Kuan Yew spoke at length on the dangers of religious extremism and mixing politics and religion in his National Day Rally address on Aug 16. The discussions over the next two years helped raise public consciousness of how fragile our religious harmony was. In 1989 - on Nov 22 - Mr Lee had a frank closed-door discussion with 51 leaders of religious groups.

The MRHA came into being against a backdrop of rising religiosity, not just in Singapore but worldwide. Mr Lee Kuan Yew said in a speech to a Buddhist gathering in December 1988, a year before the MRHA was tabled in Parliament: 'The present phase in Singapore tends more towards intensely held beliefs than towards tolerant co-existence. At a time when Islam is resurgent and thrusting, Christians, especially Charismatics, are in a dynamic, evangelical phase. This has sometimes led to friction, and requires sensitive handling.'

In recent years, do you see evidence of a similar situation building up? The recent leadership tussle at Aware, with one faction coming from a common church background, could, for example, be seen as one manifestation of the resurgence of the Christian right - if it ever subsided. From the Government's point of view, what other indications are there of rising religiosity in Singapore? Is this rising religiosity to be found among all religions?

All religions are becoming more active. But then, this is a worldwide trend. There is greater religiosity across nearly all religions. We cannot be immune from these trends.

Increased religiosity in itself is not a problem. I see no harm in religious groups being active and trying to get more followers to increase their numbers. But it is what they do and how they go about it in our multiracial and multi-religious society that is extremely important.

Assuming there is again rising religiosity, have the lessons from the 1980s put the Government in a good position to deal with the current situation? What things would the Government do differently this time compared to the 1980s?

The question implies that it is the Government's job. It cannot be the Government's job alone. All parties have a role.

The Government can set certain rules, principles and sanctions. But laws and law enforcement alone are not enough. It is foolish to think that racial and religious harmony can be decreed by legislative fiat.

The Government can set ground rules and OB markers, including by legislation, to ensure that religious freedom is exercised within the context of a multiracial and multi-religious society. It also sets the tone by taking a firm, no-nonsense, impartial approach with anyone bent on creating mischief.

The Government also ensures that the State is secular and even-handed. The Government is not pro-any religion. Nor is it anti-any religion. It believes religion should be a positive factor for our society. We want all religions to co-exist peacefully and continue to do their good work in the community - running schools, doing social work and helping the aged and handicapped.

Religious leaders and followers have a critical role to play. They have the capacity to influence and mobilise their followers. Their activities must not polarise society. They have to be mindful of the sensitivities of other religious groups, and the need for moderation in their activities.

We are fortunate that in Singapore, the religious leaders and majority of their followers are sensible and rational and appreciate Singapore's vulnerabilities. Most Singaporeans are generally tolerant of religious rituals and practices insofar as they do not impinge on their private space.

Individuals and groups, whether they are religious or not, also have roles in fostering inter-racial and religious harmony and social cohesion. They must conduct themselves with restraint and moderation and not impose their beliefs and values on others.

The media too has an important role to play. A responsible media can help to inculcate the right values and messages, and avoid sensationalising or whipping up emotive issues that touch on race and religion.

When the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Bill was tabled in 1989 and subsequently sent to a Select Committee for further deliberation, religious groups raised many concerns related to the meaning and interpretation of certain terms.

One common fear was that it would curb missionary activity. Some even argued that the Act could breach their constitutional right to freedom of religion.

With the passage of time and the accumulation of more experience on the ground, has more clarity been achieved on this issue? Dare we even hope that a consensus of sorts has been attained on what is permissible and what is not under the MRHA? If yes, how has it been achieved?

Many of those questions and concerns were taken into account when the Bill was revised by the Select Committee.

Do we need more finely calibrated rules and sub-rules? No. What we need is a common-sense approach on the part of everyone, individuals and groups. As a member of a religious group, of course one will want to worship, promote his religion.

At the end of the day, what kind of country and society are we? We are not a country with a single dominant religion. We have many religions. We are one of the world's most densely populated countries, with people of different religions living in close proximity to one another.

How we go about promoting and practising our religion in this multi-religious society is very important - whether we show tolerance, accommodation and a live-and-let-live approach.

If everyone insists on doing things on the basis of entitlement and rights, without regard to the nature of our society and the interests of others, we will have big problems.

So it is important that we must go on a common-sense approach, rather than one of insisting on absolute rights argued from divine authority or first principles. We need to ask: What will work in Singapore, and what will cause trouble in Singapore?

In the United States, both sides have taken hardline extreme positions, arguing on the basis of constitutional rights (to abortion, to gay partnerships, etc) or on absolute scriptural proscriptions. The result is unending culture wars. Why do we want to import them to Singapore? Here, it will not be conflicts and tensions between Christians with different views, but between different religions, and that would be disastrous.

I believe that the way in which the Government has handled the various issues, which have cropped up from to time over the past 20 years, will have shown that (a) the Government is secular; (b) it is not pro- or anti-any religion; (c) we try to nip problems in the bud; and (d) where we resort to laws, this is done only when really necessary.

Another contentious issue concerning the MRHA was that it sought to draw a line between religion and politics - to erect a wall between them, in fact. Mr Goh Chok Tong conceded the difficulty of separating the two halves, but said: 'We must try...for the common good of all Singaporeans.' Christians and Muslims are among those who would argue that separating the two is impossible and indeed contrary to the teachings of their respective religions. What pointers can the Government provide for these religious Singaporeans, who want to do their duty by both their religion and by their country as good citizens? What more can be done to help forge a consensus?

I fully share what Deputy Prime Minister Wong Kan Seng said in his recent statement (May 15) replying to queries on the Aware saga.

This is an extract from what he said then:

On Rules Of Engagement:

'Religious individuals have the same rights as any citizen to express their views on issues in the public space, as guided by their teachings and personal conscience. However, like every citizen, they should always be mindful of the sensitivities of living in a multi-religious society.

'All religious groups will naturally teach their followers to follow the precepts of their scriptures, to do good and to contribute to society. The groups will naturally have views on social and moral issues. But we are not a Christian Singapore, or a Muslim Singapore, or a Buddhist or Hindu Singapore. We are a secular Singapore, in which Christians, Muslims,

Buddhists, Hindus and others all have to live in peace with one another. This calls for tolerance, accommodation, and give and take on all sides.

'If religious groups start to campaign to change certain government policies, or use the pulpit to mobilise their followers to pressure the Government, or push aggressively to gain ground at the expense of other groups, this must lead to trouble. Keeping religion and politics separate is a key rule of political engagement.'

On why the political arena must be secular:

'Religious groups and individuals who hold deep religious beliefs are often active in social issues, and make important contributions to the well-being of our society. Individuals who commit themselves to social or public service are often motivated by their religious convictions. And many religious groups do good work serving people in need, regardless of religious affiliations. We welcome that. They set the moral tone of our society, and are a source of strength in times of adversity.

'However, our political arena must always be a secular one. Our laws and policies do not derive from religious authority, but reflect the judgments and decisions of the secular Government and Parliament to serve the national interest and collective good. These laws and public policies apply equally to all, regardless of one's race, religion or social status. This gives confidence that the system will give equal treatment and protection for all, regardless of which group one happens to belong to.'

Some argue that because no restraining order has been issued under the MRHA, it has been only a showpiece. Others say it worked mainly as a deterrent. What is your response?

Showpiece? Well, when I spoke in Parliament during the third reading of the Bill on Nov 9, 1990, I did foresee 'the best case scenario is that no occasion arises where we need to invoke this Bill'. I also said then that we will exhaust all other remedies, like advising, counselling, etc. So the best scenario has happened: We have not had to issue a restraining order under the Act.

That does not mean that we have no problems but rather that we have been quick to defuse the problems through active management, mediation and, where necessary, admonition, sometimes working with religious leaders.

So non-invoking of the MRHA does not mean that it is a white elephant or showpiece. It is part of our suite of tools to maintain law and order and communal harmony.

Take the Sedition Act: We rarely use it but it is available when we need it. There are also provisions in Penal Code and other laws. But prosecution is resorted to only in serious cases.

Could you give us examples of cases that could have been dealt with under the MRHA since 1990?

If you look at the 1989 White Paper, there was an Annex setting out actual instances around that time where inter-religious tensions could arise through actions which did not adequately take into account sensitivities of other groups.

I can tell you that even today, 20 years later, we do have from time to time such incidents. I cannot go into the details but examples would be cases involving insensitive proselytisation or denigration of other religions or even misunderstandings and quarrels which, if not handled properly, can lead to emotions and cause tensions.

Our approach is to nip these problems in the bud. How do we do that? By counselling, advising and, where necessary, by warning that the Government will act under the MRHA if they persist in their conduct.

Occasionally, in serious cases, the Attorney-General may decide to bring criminal proceedings, such as the recent case against the couple found guilty of distributing seditious material under the Sedition Act.

Some say that when government statements about racial and religious harmony are made too often, there is a danger that they become taken for granted. How real is this danger?

Twenty years have passed, the problems are still here. They will never disappear. We must view religious harmony and racial harmony as constant works in progress.

I worry that an entire new generation which has never experienced communal conflict may believe that we have nothing to worry about, that our present religious harmony is a natural state of affairs and will never be under threat. I worry that people don't realise how fragile racial and religious harmony is. It is foolhardy to take these things for granted and become complacent.

The greatest danger to racial and religious harmony is complacency - to believe that all will be fine always; that we have arrived.

The reality is that maintaining religious harmony will always be a work in progress. It requires active monitoring and intervention when necessary.

You ask me if government leaders are making statements about racial, religious harmony too often? And people will become jaded and take it for granted? I do not think so. I worry that some of our people are taking racial and religious harmony for granted, and that is why we need to periodically remind ourselves.

In 2002, in the wake of 9/11 and the Jemaah Islamiah arrests, then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said 'it is time to give Singaporeans a jolt, to remind them that they are living in a multiracial, multi-religious society'. Is 2009 time for another jolt?

Go back to 1987. We foresaw the problem in 1987 and decided to bring it out in the open. Indeed, over the last two decades, the worldwide trend has been towards greater religiosity, and Singaporeans have been carried along by this. So we must be aware of the stresses and strains, and continue to work hard to maintain our racial and religious harmony. We must not think that after 20 years without incident, we can afford to relax.

THE DANGER

'If everyone insists on doing things on the basis of entitlement and rights, without regard to the nature of our society and the interests of others, we will have big problems.'

Senior Minister Jayakumar

WORK IN PROGRESS

'The greatest danger to racial and religious harmony is complacency - to believe that all will be fine always; that we have arrived. The reality is that maintaining religious harmony will always be a work in progress. It requires active monitoring and intervention when necessary.'

Professor S. Jayakumar

LOAD-DATE: July 25, 2009

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH
PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Appendix 17

The Straits Times (Singapore)

(S.T., May 3, 2009)

The awareness to right a wrong; Hundreds of women joined Aware to make their voices heard after group's takeover

BYLINE: Radha Basu, Senior Correspondent

LENGTH: 625 words

Until recently, many of them had no more than a passing knowledge of the Association of Women for Action and Research (Aware).

But concerned over what they saw as a stealthy takeover of a secular organisation by a group of Christian women, hundreds of women signed up as Aware members to put right what they felt was a grave wrong.

And yesterday, they spoke clearly, in a resounding vote of no confidence in Aware's five-week-old leadership.

Several spoke up at the Aware extraordinary general meeting, questioning Ms Josie Lau and her team, as well as their mentor, veteran lawyer Thio Su Mien, who had encouraged women to take over Aware.

Internet executive Hafizah Osman, 39, pointed out that Ms Lau and her executive committee (exco) members were all of the same race and faith.

'Where is the diversity?' asked the mother of two, who wore a pink headscarf.

'As a Muslim woman, I have no faith that you can represent my voice, my views, my faith.'

Business development manager Siddy Zb, 45, said that the new Aware team contravened the spirit of the Singapore pledge, which promises to build a democratic society based on justice and equality for all.

'This is not about the new guard or old guard,' she said. 'You deliberately left out the old guard who were on your committee at meetings,' she said. 'Is that equality?'

The new exco's stand against homosexuality also generated heated debate.

Associate Professor Chitra Sankaran, 49, from the National University of Singapore, who teaches a module in feminism, said that she felt compelled to join Aware last month as she thought the new committee would harm its international stature.

She rose to point out that according to modern feminist theory, you cannot speak about one marginalised group - in this case women - without speaking for all marginalised groups, including racial, religious and sexual minorities.

Observing that Aware had won widespread respect in the region, she said: 'Please do not undermine Aware's international credibility with your thoughtless actions.'

Public relations executive Meera N, 23, spoke up, saying: 'I am not a raging lesbian, but I believe you have no right to tell us who to love. It's ridiculous. You have to be pro-choice.'

She too joined Aware recently, to be heard.

Undergraduate May Yee, 21, defended Aware's sexuality education programme, which has faced flak from the new guard for a chart in which homosexuality is treated as neutral.

She said she had had a Christian education and added: 'I did not come out of the system learning to judge people. For people to make informed choices, they must have information.'

Arguing for parents to give their children access to optional school-based sexuality education programmes, she said: 'The alternative is the Internet and it's much harder, especially without adult guidance.'

Many women who described themselves as Christians also said they disagreed with the new exco, with some chiding them for 'un-Christian behaviour'.

Actress Irene Ang, who runs a talent agency, criticised the new exco for changing the locks on the Aware office and asked: 'How can you change the locks and say your doors are open?'

Ms Dale Edmonds, a mother who described herself as a 'traditional Christian', also spoke passionately in favour of Aware's sexuality education programme and its other programmes.

She said that as an 18-year-old she had received free legal advice from Aware and it helped her get out of a bad marriage.

'They helped me when I needed help badly. Now I want to do what I can do help them back,' she said.

Although the Josie Lau team had several hundred women supporters in the room, hardly any stood up to speak during the proceedings.

From their seats, some of them would call out: 'How rude, how rude.'

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PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper

Appendix 18

The Straits Times (Singapore)

(S.T., May 27, 2009)

How to beat S'pore's work woes;
Champion of workers Halimah Yacob believes in higher skills and creativity as sure paths to prosperity

BYLINE: Radha Basu, Senior Correspondent

LENGTH: 1676 words

CREATING the best workforce and workplace in the world is the surest path to prosperity in today's volatile world, says parliamentarian and unionist Halimah Yacob.

But Singapore still has some way to go before achieving this, says the veteran MP and deputy secretary-general of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC).

The indefatigable champion of workers, who took over as chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee (GPC) for Manpower last week, will scrutinise manpower policies and provide input on how they can be tweaked to keep pace with the vagaries of the economic climate. Continuous learning, she advocates, is the best way forward in these tough times.

Pointing out that Singapore had been lacerated by four recessions in a little more than a decade, she notes that guaranteed employment is history, not just here but all over the world.

This being the case, companies need to 'create clear learning paths' to help individual workers develop their careers.

'Lifelong learning is the only way to lifelong employability and income security,' she says.

Going back to the classroom is important not only for those who fuel the 'knowledge economy', but even for rank-and-file blue-collar workers. 'In the old days, good eyesight and nimble fingers were all that were needed to be a factory worker.'

But with labour-intensive jobs moving to cheaper markets, factory workers here need to know how to operate multiple, sophisticated machines worth millions of dollars.

'This requires computer skills. Although it's still a production job, the skill and knowledge needed is much higher.'

The other key ingredient in shaping up the most competitive workforce in the world is more intangible.

'It is the unique value-add that workers provide that has become the main distinguishing factor between the performance of one country or company and another,' says Madam Halimah, a lawyer by training. She joined the labour movement in 1978.

'We need to focus not just on infrastructure and machinery, but on how to help people to create value. We need to make the jump from being able to do a job to finding creative solutions to problems - not just old solutions, but new and innovative ones.'

At Panasonic Refrigeration Devices Singapore, a factory she visited last week, suggestions from factory workers helped save the company precious dollars.

The company ended up replacing the timber boxes used to pack refrigerator parts with cheaper and lighter cardboard cartons, enabling workers to pack them faster.

While such sparks are heartening, they are still far from the norm.

Seeds of creativity need to be sown not at workplaces, but much earlier - at school and university, says the mother of five children aged between 18 and 27.

'We need to look hard at our education system and see how best to produce workers who don't just work hard but know how to think out of the box and ask questions.'

Cutting costs and saving jobs

BUT her immediate priority is to help companies cut costs and save jobs.

Last quarter, 12,600 people here lost their jobs as retrenchments scaled a 10-year peak. Two schemes the Government launched to help workers cope - Spur and Jobs Credit - have helped stanch the bleed.

Dismissing criticism that such moves help businesses more than workers, she says that both programmes are a 'win-win' formula that helped both groups.

Take the case of Japanese disk drive manufacturer Murata Electronics, the first company to make use of Spur, under which the Government pays up to 90 per cent of course fees for worker training.

At the time, Murata's orders had plunged to a new low. By sending its workers for training under Spur, the company saved $500,000 and was able to reduce retrenchments. Now its workers are reskilled and orders are finally looking up.

But her work as the chief purveyor of manpower policies will be far from over when Singapore pulls out of the recession. Her long-term wish list is extensive, and high on the list is improving the lot of low-skilled, female and foreign workers.

First, she wants to bridge the rich-poor income divide.

'After every recession, there is a decline in level of wages as pay cuts may not be restored,' she says.

This may be a global phenomenon, but one that Singapore cannot take lightly, as it already has a relatively high Gini coefficient at 0.48, which is comparable to countries like Mexico (0.47) and Uganda (0.43). This coefficient is the international benchmark for measuring income inequalities between the richest and poorest in a country.

If you factor in 'social transfers' or the handouts the Government gives to the poor - such as the Workfare Income Supplement - the coefficient falls slightly to 0.46.

'But long term, we need to worry about this and make sure that social cohesion is not affected.'

With Singapore's focus on ensuring that all children get a proper education - an additional $67.5 million was poured in just this past weekend towards this goal - she believes that eventually a better-educated population will narrow the rich-poor divide.

'But it's today's low-wage workers that worry me. Some who are just in their 40s may have another 20 years of working life left.'

She hopes the Government will consider raising from $1,500 to $1,800 the income ceiling of the Workfare Income Supplement, a government payout that is given to help shore up the wages of older workers.

Another imperative: Creating 'good quality' jobs that pay well. Some of this is already happening.

Job re-creation schemes that aim to turn low-paying jobs into better-paying ones are underway, including in the security industry.

Five years ago, security guards earned an average of $800, a little more than half the $1,500 they do today.

The value-add? They need to be trained and now use sophisticated surveillance equipment.

Helping more women go back to work is another key priority.

'Women have less CPF savings, Medisave and retirement income,' she says.

Yet, on average they suffer 11 years of disability, compared to just eight years for men, towards the end of their lives.

'They also need a lot more treatment and incur higher health-care costs.'

Singapore's labour force participation rate for women - at around 55 per cent last June - is abysmally low, compared to Scandinavian countries such as Sweden (81 per cent) and Norway (80 per cent).

Getting more companies to embrace flexi-work options is one way of ensuring that women, often bogged down with care-giving, get an opportunity to earn an income.

Companies can also make use of the Government's FlexiWork Fund to help defray the costs of introducing flexible work arrangements such as staggered hours or shorter work weeks.

Companies such as SingPost have already come up with innovative ways of employing housewives.

The company makes use of housewives to deliver letters in Housing Board estates during their free time.

'The work is organised around the women rather than the other way around,' she notes. 'We need more of such arrangements.'

Respect in the workplace

FINALLY, she hopes companies here will accord equal respect to both local and foreign workers.

'A nurturing workplace is one that empowers workers, ensures their safety - and above all - obeys the laws of the land. Judging by the number of instances of employers not complying with our laws - especially with regard to foreign workers - we have some distance to go.'

Recent cases of workers coming here on legal work permits after paying hefty fees to agents, but being repatriated after getting no work, are a 'shame' that she fears could ultimately reap a grim harvest for Singapore.

While governments in the origin countries need to police their own rogue agents, she says better enforcement of laws here is also necessary.

It was reported recently that the authorities in China's Fujian province were discouraging their workers from coming to Singapore.

'If more areas follow suit, this could cost Singapore dearly,' she says. 'Saving these workers from the terrible hardship they face is ultimately in Singapore's best interests.'

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New head of Manpower GPC

MADAM Halimah Yacob, 54, is deputy secretary-general of the National Trades Union Congress and a member of Parliament for Jurong GRC. Last week, she took over the chair of the Government Parliamentary Committee (GPC) for Manpower.

In her new role, she will provide feedback to the Government on gaps in manpower policy.

A lawyer by training, she has more than 30 years of experience at NTUC, which she first joined as a legal officer in 1978.

In 1999, she became the first Singaporean to get a seat on the governing body of the International Labour Organisation.

Two years later, after completing her master's in law from the National University of Singapore, she became the first Malay-Muslim woman to become an MP in independent Singapore.

She is a board member of the National University of Singapore, the Economic Development Board and the Housing Board, as well as a patron of the Young Women Muslim Association.

She won the Berita Harian McDonald's Achiever of the Year Award in 2001 and followed it up with the 2003 Her World Woman of the Year Award.

A mother of five children aged between 18 and 27, she is married to businessman Mohammed Abdullah Alhabshee.

ON THE CHANGING NATURE OF WORKPLACES

'It is no longer possible to have a command-and- control, authoritarian style of managing people, reminiscent of the assembly line operations of the past. Workers need to be empowered so that they can feel greater ownership and suggest ways to save costs and improve productivity.'

ON CARING EMPLOYERS BEGETTING COMMITTED WORKERS

'Thinking and productive workers and caring employers are two sides of the same coin. We cannot have one without the other.'

ON HER VISION FOR SINGAPORE

'The best workplace in the world is one where there is respect for workers' rights, including those enshrined in the various laws on employment, industrial relations and safety, where workers are assessed on merit and adequately rewarded and recognised for their efforts. These should apply equally to both foreign and local workers.'

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